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Irregular sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco:
Illegality, immobility, uncertainty and 'adventure' in Rabat

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Declaration of own work

This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

As a result of European externalization of the politics of migration, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries like Morocco are increasingly co-opted to deter asylum-seekers and other migrants. These latter, criminalized and labelled as 'illegal', are prevented from reaching a Europe whose economy nevertheless partially relies on the precarious and low-cost labour of *sans-papiers*. As Morocco shifts from a country of mainly emigration to also a country of 'transit' and immigration, thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants find themselves 'stranded', unable to go further, return or gain a meaningful legal status in Morocco. The research focuses on the two poor and densely populated neighbourhoods of Douar Hajja and Maadid, often called after the larger, adjacent neighbourhood Taqaddoum ('*progress'* in Arabic). Reputed to be violent and dangerous, they host a visible, (im)mobile population of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants struggling to cope with everyday life and (re)considering their uncertain migratory journeys.

This research engages with recent critical debates in anthropology over 'mobility' and 'illegalization' to examine how 'irregular' sub-Saharan migrants cope with violent abuses and attempt to exert control over their lives in a Moroccan marginal neighbourhood. Exploring migrants' imagination and hope, it focuses particularly on migrants' circumscribed agency as well as emerging social relationships and political participation. Rather than adding to the profuse production of migration studies concepts, the thesis contends that migrants' own articulations of notions such as 'adventure' and 'objective' offer an analytical tool to overcome some of the pitfalls of other concepts (e.g. transit, imagined community) which do not completely succeed in accounting for migrants' experiences; their own ambiguities and limits are useful in uncovering some of the dilemmas faced by migrants in Morocco.

Lay Summary

As a result of European externalization of the politics of migration, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries like Morocco are increasingly co-opted to deter asylum-seekers and other migrants. These latter, criminalized and labelled as 'illegal', are prevented from reaching a Europe whose economy nevertheless partially relies on the precarious and low-cost labour of *sans-papiers*. As Morocco shifts from a country of mainly emigration to also a country of 'transit' and immigration, thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants find themselves 'stranded', unable to go further, return or gain a meaningful legal status in Morocco. The research focuses on the two poor and densely populated neighbourhoods of Douar Hajja and Maadid, often called after the larger, adjacent neighbourhood Taqaddoum ('*progress'* in Arabic). Reputed to be violent and dangerous, they host a visible, (im)mobile population of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants struggling to cope with everyday life and (re)considering their uncertain migratory journeys.

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For Giulio and Viclane

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Introduction

I '*Le poids de la misère*' (The weight of misery) – Opening Scene

Somewhere in the desert: Two men, visibly exhausted, stop along a narrow stream and lie down. They no longer believe it. They never thought they would come across anybody else, yet their eyes set on the silhouettes of two other men waving at them from the other side of the river. They get up to join them and talk about where they come from, their journeys and how long they have been walking for. They resume walking together and keep talking:

- 'It is not easy, we come from the east and we are heading west.'
- 'They say it is better further west.'
- 'A litre of water is worth more than millions in this desert.'
- 'I lost some relatives on this road.'
- 'Talk about the future, not about the past.'
- 'If others have managed to pass, then why not me?'

They reach the place where people from the desert scam travellers by pretending to be smugglers. There are five or six of them, tall and wearing turbans which cover their faces and only leave the slits of their eyes visible. One says 'Nobody moves, we are going to search your bags.' They try to rob the four men but their chief stops them: 'No, it is not good. You do not know where they come from. They are Africans.' He turns towards the four men: 'Pick up your bags and get lost.'

The four resume walking and reach a small village. They approach it because they want to know where the road coming from the west lies. They only find women who are surprised to see them appearing in their village and to hear where they come from. At the same time, a man arrives from the west on his way back to his village. He is one of the sons of this village and is returning to visit his parents. He kisses them. The four men are observing the scene and think about the journey without tomorrow they have undertaken. It makes them sad and the strongest comfort the weakest.

The four men are shown the way towards the west and they continue walking. They reach the west where they find all nationalities near the water [the Mediterranean Sea]. There are those who want to shock [*choquer*] to get into Spain.[1] These ones gather round together and buy a zodiac.[2] There are those who succeed, those who drown and die. There are those who decide to return home and settle. There are those who stay and create some small activities, like cooking *beignets* [a Cameroonian type of doughnut]. Americans and Europeans who come to visit also taste them.

***

[1] A term used by sub-Saharan migrants to refer to border-crossing 'attempts' (*tentatives*) and which points out the violence and police brutality entailed.

[2] An inflatable, flimsy, rubber dinghy used to cross the sea to the Spanish mainland and enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

The title and opening scene of Nottingham's movie script, translated above, was epic in its range. It was bleak and yet hopeful, tragic and resolute, a Saharan Steinbeck tale of a harrowing journey west towards the promised land of Maghreb or Europe in place of California. Other migrants joked that 'the weight' in the title referred to the layer of fat around Nottingham's waist, gained through his small business venture – frying *beignets* in the derelict and overcrowded *L'Embassade* (the Embassy), a building hosting mostly Cameroonian sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum, a marginal neighbourhood of Rabat.

Nottingham was a Cameroonian migrant in his early thirties who had left his country after years of living on the streets and getting by with odd jobs. He wanted to make it to Europe and earn enough money to build orphanages for children in Cameroon. Though he had taught himself to cook in order to make a living in Taqaddoum, he was also an aspiring writer and had already written four scripts: 'Three minutes of panic', 'The saga of the ghetto', 'If I were a cop' and 'A nice guy'. None had ever been adapted for a movie, but Nottingham hoped I could help shooting his latest creation in Taqaddoum.

We were discussing this possibility on a late summer morning in 2012, on the first floor of *L'Embassade*, in one of its narrow and windowless bedrooms. Blankets were tucked along the walls next to migrants' bags, ready-packed for travelling. Our conversation was regularly interrupted by Clément, a young Francophone Nigerian working as Nottingham's assistant, enquiring about customers' credit. Nottingham and I never shot the movie and the script, to my knowledge, remains unfinished. Although he often repeated that he would not try again to cross into the Spanish enclave of Melilla, he left a few months later for the forest camps around Nador in northern Morocco. Following another failed attempt at crossing and deportation into the desert, he remained in Algeria for a while. Eventually, he returned to Taqaddoum towards the end of my fieldwork, reconsidering his options: to return to his home country, to stay there longer, or to 'go forward' and attempt to cross to Europe again. He shared these choices and dilemmas with all the other sub-Saharan migrants I encountered in Taqaddoum.

After discussing the script with Nottingham, I moved to the rooftop terrace of *L'Embassade*, where others were busy doing their laundry and chatting about the

borders, sharing jokes and news about wounded migrants. Most of them sat on empty gas bottles, their backs set against the unpainted external walls of red brick and coarse concrete. There was a lot of banter about how one young man amongst them would never be allowed into France by Nicholas Sarkozy on account of the terrible table manners he displayed while gulping down the beans and *beignets* served in small colourful plastic plates.

My friend Picas updated me on the latest developments in the small irregular migrants' association they had set up for sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum and which was holding regular meetings in *L'Embassade* on Sundays. There were some issues with drawing up a list of participants for an upcoming forum on migration organised by Moroccan NGOs in Oujda. As we squeezed by a young Cameroonian sitting in the staircase, spreading lukewarm 'laughing-cow' cheese on his bread, Picas' reference to the name of the association – '*Association Lutte contre L'Emigration Clandestine au Maroc*' (Fighting against Clandestine Emigration to Morocco Association, ALECMA) – made the youth freeze. Puzzled, and holding his knife mid-air, the youth inquired, 'Why fighting against clandestine migration?' Picas explained the association encouraged undocumented migrants to 'migrate with papers' since life was so hard for them in Morocco. The man looked unconvinced as we left. I was glad somebody else had picked up on how bizarre ALECMA's name sounded.

This thesis is concerned with how irregular, sub-Saharan migrants cope with their violent and precarious situation in Morocco – a country which has recently seen a shift from mostly emigration by its own nationals to one of transit and immigration for sub-Saharans. This transformation has been fraught with documented abuses and infringements of human rights against migrants by Moroccan as well as European authorities, but it has been accompanied by the mobilisation of activists (including migrants themselves) across the Mediterranean region. The present study focuses on Taqaddoum, a marginal neighbourhood of the capital city, and a place my Ivoirian informant Charlie described as the 'neuralgic centre' for sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. There, migrants reflect on their journeys, weigh their options, and make decisions on what to do next.

I investigate how sub-Saharans living in Taqaddoum deal with issues of illegality, immobility, and uncertainty as their migratory journeys are fraught with

violence but also informed by hope. By drawing on critical analyses of 'illegality', I explore the ambiguity of living in the shadows of the state to demonstrate how portraying migrants as inherently passive misses crucial aspects entailed by their marginalization. Whilst migrants are the targets of repressive measures (e.g. arrest and deportation), they are largely left to organize their daily life. For instance, I examine how sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum have set up their own living arrangements in 'ghettoes', such as in *L'Embassade* mentioned above.

Moreover, migrants' ability to act is not reduced to 'bare' functions. Beyond practical arrangements such as shelter, I pay particular attention to how irregular migrants challenge what being political means through an examination of the development of an irregular migrants' association (the aforementioned ALECMA) in this peripheral neighbourhood. In doing so, I engage with existing scholarship on citizenship and migrants' protests. By focusing on a seemingly contradictory set of demands articulated by members of ALECMA, I argue that studies of migrants' political agency should not be limited to the issue of 'citizenship' within a host state but should engage with plural and ambiguous activities to better account for irregular migrants' embeddedness in the political realm.

Rather than depicting sub-Saharan migrants as mere victims, I focus on their active involvement in processes marked by resilience. To critically engage with such processes, I explore how my informants discussed their own journeys in epic terms, referring to them as 'the adventure' (*l'aventure*), which they usually defined by two elements: suffering and the quest for 'the objective'. I argue that it is crucial to pay specific attention to emic terms (such as 'objective', '*chance'*) since established concepts in migration studies (e.g. transit) are sometimes ill-suited to understanding migrants' predicaments in Morocco. For instance, the thesis draws on current debates concerning 'immobility' to explore why sub-Saharan migrants are prepared to risk drowning or being beaten in order to cross to Spain. In contrast with the loaded concept of 'transit' which entails a fixed destination, my informants' reference to the 'objective' (aka 'the quest for a life more bearable') allows for a more nuanced understanding of migrants' fragmented journeys. Rather than a predefined destination, I argue that my informants were pursuing certain aspirations (e.g. to be 'comfortable').

Hence, beyond considerations of roots and routes, analyses of migration ought to attend to migrants' imagination, dreams and hopes.

Further, I draw on recent studies of encampment to explore how migrants' presence in such marginal settings entails a transformative potential for the migrants themselves as they stay for increasingly longer periods, but also for the neighbourhood of Taqaddoum and Morocco more broadly. For instance, besides political activities, I look at the ambiguous relationships between irregular migrants and disenfranchised Moroccans and argue that such encounters, despite being marked by racism and violence, are nonetheless 'hopeful'. The processes examined in this thesis, like the migrants' journeys more broadly, were marked by indeterminacy. Following recent studies which point to the productive potentials of 'uncertainty', I examine how migrants make sense of the uncertain outcomes of their border crossing attempts by pointing to the combination of strength, courage and what they called '*chance'*.

Exploring how irregular migrants themselves understand their bounded and uncertain mobility is crucial. Failing to do would contribute to migrants' dominant portrayal as voiceless victims. Nonetheless, migrants' heroic self-portrayal as adventurers is potentially deceiving too. Indeed, I also examine how sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum complained about deceptive information by migrants themselves, with important consequences for those who followed them 'on the road' with hopes of easy success. Hence, I also explore some of the moral conundrums faced by adventurers. For instance, in exploring the dynamics of trust and solidarity amongst migrants, I argue that 'suffering' and recognizing in each other the ability to cope with it was both the basis and the limit of relationships amongst irregular migrants.

II Context

1 Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco

Migreurop records the account of Moussa, a Guinean migrant who, along with over 500 sub-Saharan migrants living in the Bel Younech forest camps near Nador, participated in the autumn 2005 '*attaques'* (attacks) – a term used by sub-Saharan migrants to refer to border-crossing attempts – on the fences protecting the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. On the 29 September 2005, the morning after the 'attack', an

important Spanish-Moroccan meeting which included discussions about further measures to tackle 'illegal' migration was due to take place in Seville.

> There were not enough gloves for everyone, some climbed without. […] We arrived in great numbers; when we started attacking, the *Alis* [nickname given to Moroccan Auxiliary Forces] came down […] and started shooting. When we started attacking the fences, the Guardia Civil were shooting. I don't know who shot first. […] The third one I saw falling in front of me was a Guinean; he was shot dead. It was the Guardia Civil that killed him. I knew him well, we had spent three years in Libya together. I stopped to try and help my friend between the two fences. When I saw I could not do anything anymore, I started climbing up the second fence, I was upset by his death. The Guardia Civil surrounded and arrested me. […] They handcuffed us, then handed us back to the other side [of the fence] (Moussa B. quoted in Migreurop 2007: 19-20).[3]

A few days later, an attempt on a similar scale was made at Melilla, the other Spanish enclave in northern Africa. These consecutive 'attacks' on the borders are commonly referred to by scholars and activists as 'the 2005 Ceuta and Melilla events'. Around fifteen people were shot dead and hundreds of others were wounded by Moroccan and Spanish forces (Migreurop 2007). In October 2005, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF 2005) – which traditionally avoided comment on Moroccan policies and practices, so as to be allowed to treat migrants – condemned the abandonment of 500 migrants 300 km south of Oujda deep into the desert without food or water. The international media talked of a crisis, but this was only the paroxystic phase of a joint Spanish-Moroccan campaign against migrants (Valluy 2007b: 9) inscribed in an overall political context which was hostile towards migration at Europe's borders.

In one of the earliest studies of sub-Saharan migration in Morocco, Barros *et al.* (2002) estimate the number of illegal sub-Saharan migrants, described as transiting through Morocco, to be around 10,000. In its 2008 report, the only significant (though now outdated) statistical study on the topic, the Association Marocaine d'Etudes et de Recherche en Migrations (AMERM 2008) estimates this population to be between 10,000 and 15,000. Until the period of my fieldwork (11/2011-08/2013), the consensus amongst researchers was that there were between 15 and 20 thousand irregular sub-

[3] My translation.

Saharan migrants living in Morocco.[4] According to Moroccan economist Lahlou, this figure should be compared with the 40 to 50 thousand Europeans living in Morocco irregularly (quoted in Yabiladi 22-09-2013). Studies by CIMADE (2004), AMERM (2008), Faleh *et al.* (2009) and Cherti and Grant (2013) have identified the main sub-Saharan countries of origin to be: Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Senegal, Guinea, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo.[5] Although outside the scope of this study, scholars have also noted the presence of migrants from Asian countries (e.g. India and Bangladesh) and the growing presence of Syrians.

As a consequence of Moroccan-European collaboration in what activists have described as 'the war against migrants' (Migreurop 2007: 3), the duration of migrants' stay in Morocco has dramatically increased for those wishing to continue towards Europe. Whilst it only took a few days in the 1990s (Goldschmidt 2002) to cross to Spain, the AMERM (2008) study reported migrants taking an average of thirty months. In a 2013 IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) study, Cherti and Grant note that 'even after extended periods in transit, many migrants still harbour hopes of entering Europe, though in practice a large proportion are likely to remain indefinitely in Morocco' (2013: 7). They also note that whilst most of their sub-Saharan respondents were still lured by Europe, 'around a quarter wished to stay permanently' (2013: 7). For irregular migrants in Morocco, going back is often too difficult – if not impossible – for fear of persecution, shame and also because journeys 'backward' are costly.

Different studies report a relatively high level of education amongst sub-Saharan migrants (AMERM 2008: 23) and a predominance of artisans and traders among those who were employed prior to emigrating (Faleh *et al.* 2009). Migratory projects are often the result of a familial investment, requiring the mobilization of significant resources, and as such the migrants are bearers of a collective hope. Nevertheless, Collyer (2010: 5) argues that although international mobility is still limited for the poorest, thanks to technological changes (e.g. money transfer, communications) the profile of migrants is no longer limited to the wealthier middle

[4] This was the case throughout my fieldwork period as the figure was relayed by most media, researchers and activists; in summer 2013, the announcement of an operation of regularisation was accompanied with new figures (often 40-50,000) from the Moroccan government without any explanation.

[5] Proportions vary in the studies and, as noted by Faleh *et al.*, migrants might conceal their 'true' nationality for fear of being deported; also, documents are frequently destroyed, lost or confiscated (2009: 29).

class. According to the AMERM study, sub-Saharan migrants are predominantly young men in their mid-twenties (AMERM 2008: 17). Yet, as illustrated by Escoffier's studies (2008), the journeys of a growing number of sub-Saharan women require more attention.

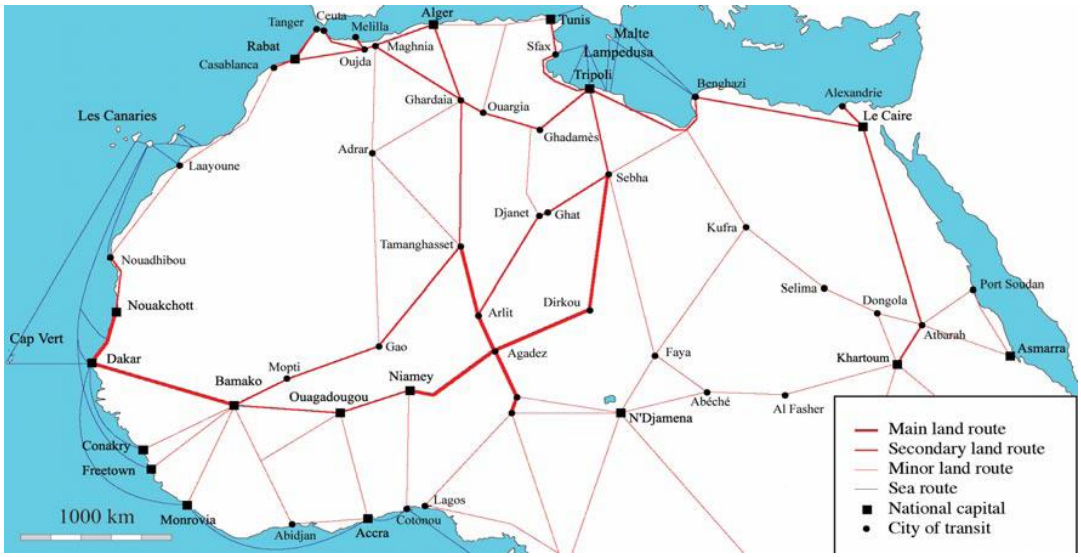

Fig. 1 Primary sub-Saharan routes (Source: Thomas More Institute 2010).

Journeys towards Morocco are lengthy – from 4,000 to 8,000 km – and typically involve the crossing of several other countries over many months or years before reaching Morocco (AMERM 2008: 28). Collyer (2006: 133) notes significant staging posts along the route: Gao in Mali, Agadès in Niger and Tamanrasset in Algeria. Faleh *et al.* observe that journeys are started by individuals traveling alone or in small groups, usually on foot until Malian and Nigerian territories, where 'guides' organize the crossing of the Algerian border (2009: 10). Often, the individuals paid by migrants to facilitate the journey are migrants themselves with repeated experience of a particular leg of the journey (Collyer 2006: 135); thus blurring an easy distinction between 'victim' and 'trafficker'. Migrants also have to stop to work on the way before resuming their arduous journeys. Such journeys are extremely dangerous and often anything but linear. The AMERM study (2008: 47) lists the main difficulties reported by migrants during these journeys as a lack of hygiene, exhaustion, thirst, hunger, long waits, sickness, arrest and *refoulement* (push-back) by police, assault, theft, tricks by smugglers, death of a companion, accidents, sexual harassment and rape. As Collyer has it, 'the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean are now widely appreciated, […] but

the dangers of becoming lost on the desert leg of the journey are at least as extreme and much less widely understood' (2006: 134).

Sub-Saharan migrants usually enter Morocco across the closed border between Maghnia in Algeria and Oujda in Morocco (Fig. 1). Another route goes through Mauritania and across the Western Sahara for migrants attempting to reach the Canary Islands, before continuing further North. Oujda hosts informal camps where newly arrived and returned (following *refoulement* to Algeria) migrants can exchange information on where to go next. Some continue towards Moroccan cities, often hiding on trains, whilst others aim for the forest camps located near the two Spanish enclaves. Oujda is located 130 km from Gourougou, one of the forests facing Melilla, and 500 km from Bel Younes, a forest adjacent to Ceuta (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 Map of Morocco (excluding contested Western Sahara) (Source: Maps.com).

The 2005 events revealed the situation of sub-Saharan migrants at the borders of Europe to both national and international audiences by highlighting the scale of human rights infringements committed in the name of migration 'management'. Yet, numerous reports had already denounced the mistreatment of sub-Saharan migrants

and infringement of their rights in the borderlands by Moroccan as well as Spanish and Algerian authorities (CIMADE 2004, AFVIC 2004). The aftermath of those dramatic events saw migrant leaders being targeted, and the multiplication of police raids in both the borderlands and marginal neighbourhoods of Moroccan cities like Casablanca and Rabat, where many migrants sought refuge after the destruction of the forest camps.

In 2013, NGOs in Morocco launched the joint 'Number 9 – Stop violence at the borders' (N9) campaign (detailed in Chapter 1) to denounce the violence that migrants – mostly from sub-Saharan African countries – continued to encounter when they attempted to access Europe irregularly via the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Whilst acknowledging some progress over the past years, the NGOs' report deplores the gradual return to violent practices (e.g. arbitrary arrests, deportations etc.) on a scale not seen since the Ceuta and Melilla events. Migrants routinely face violent beatings, the theft of their belongings (usually mobile phones and cash), the destruction of their material, the confiscation of their identification documents, illegal *refoulement* back to Morocco when they have already crossed to Spain, or deportation to the hostile desert between Algeria and Morocco. These represent only a few of the numerous violations of migrants' physical integrity, dignity and rights (GADEM *et al.* 2013a).

Over the past years, NGOs have periodically denounced peaks of violence such as the 'migrants' hunt' in Morocco's cities (GADEM 2011) and the general increase of repression against migrants, including pregnant women, minors, asylum seekers and refugees who should be protected under international and Moroccan legislation. A joint press release issued by GADEM and CMSM (Conseil des Migrants sub-Sahariens au Maroc; a migrants' association) decries that 'all the signs are here, unfortunately, to show that Morocco pursues its drift towards securitarianism [*sécuritarisme*] […] to the detriment of the respect for its international obligations' (GADEM and CMSM 2012).[6] In October 2012, Camara Laye, a migrant leader of CMSM, was arrested in his home on dubious charges of selling alcohol illegally as Morocco resumed its targeting of migrant activists. In an open letter to the European Union, Mamfakinch, a group of Moroccan pro-democracy activists, and several other

[6] My translation.

organisations denounced these practices and the silent complicity of Europe, ironically asking leaders to show themselves worthy of the EU's 2012 Nobel Prize.[7] Furthermore, before ceasing its activities in Morocco, MSF (2013) released a report highlighting the recourse to violence by Spanish and Moroccan authorities. The report, whilst acknowledging some progress regarding access to health for migrants, illustrates that

> Violence remains a daily reality for the majority of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. […] The period since December 2011 has seen a sharp increase in abuse, degrading treatment and violence against sub-Saharan migrants by Moroccan and Spanish security forces. This report also reveals the widespread violence carried out by criminal gangs, including bandits and human smuggling and human trafficking networks. It provides a glimpse into the shocking levels of sexual violence that migrants are exposed to throughout the migration process and demands better assistance and protection for those affected. (2013: 3)

The N9 campaign asked for the opening of an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the suspicious deaths of migrants, especially in the borderlands with Spain (Bachelet 2013). The campaign also denounced the racism endured by sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco (see Chapter 3). On 12th August, fifteen days after a Congolese migrant with regular immigration documents died when he was thrown out of a police bus on the motorway, and twelve days after an Ivoirian woman accused Moroccan police of raping her, a young Senegalese pilgrim was stabbed to death in Rabat by a Moroccan soldier travelling on his bus (Yabiladi 15-08-2013). In a press release, GADEM (2013) condemned the murder and noted that institutional violence in Morocco targeting sub-Saharan migrants could only lead to the normalisation of racist and violent acts in Morocco against migrants. A few weeks later, a BBC Newsnight report investigated 'allegations from illegal immigrants in Morocco of abuse by police forces which are partially funded by the EU' (BBC News 04-09-2013). Below, I sketch the development of the externalization of the European Union's (hostile) migration politics and the pivotal role played by southern Mediterranean countries such as Morocco – with perilous consequences for migrants.

[7] Available in English here: http://openlettereu.blogspot.co.uk/ (Accessed 15 November 2015).

2 The externalization of European politics of migration

Despite the ubiquitous circulation of information, goods and capital, Balibar notes that 'the movements of men are the object of heavier and heavier limitations' (2004: 113). Hence, as Badiou puts it, 'the price of the supposedly unified world of capital is the brutal division of human existence into regions separated by police dogs, bureaucratic controls, naval patrols, barbed wire and expulsions' (2008: 38). Migrants are portrayed as a destructive horde at the borders of Europe. As migration in Europe is 'increasingly interpreted as a security problem' (Bigo 2002: 63), 'bogus asylum-seekers', 'benefit-scroungers', and 'illegal migrants' have become interchangeable terms that reflect current tendency towards the criminalization of migrants (Kundani 2007).[8] This redefinition of migration does not reflect changes in the costs of migration, but 'a growing tendency to channel diffuse socioeconomic and cultural concerns into the migration "problem"' (Boswell 2003: 623). Yet, describing the European Union as a 'gated community' rather than 'a fortress', van Houtum and Pijpers note that the deadly 'walls of conservative solidification [around the EU] also contain neo-liberal mazes and conscious blindness for specific (illegal) labour forces that help to sustain the ease and comfort' (2007: 306).

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Sea borders	*14,260*	*71,172*	*23,254*	*60,173*	*220,194*
Land borders	*89,800*	*69,879*	*49,183*	*47,192*	*63,338*
Total	**104,060**	**141,051**	**72,437**	**107,365**	**283,532**

Fig. 3 'Illegal Border Crossings between BCPs' (Source: Frontex 2014, 2015).

Despite the 'myth of invasion' (de Haas 2007a), most irregular migrants in the EU have entered the union regularly before changing status (e.g. through a breach of visa). However, clandestine migration, especially from across the Mediterranean sea, is the 'most visible manifestation of changing migration patterns has become a physical challenge to the integrity of Europe's external borders' (Baldwin-Edwards 2006: 312). According to statistics (Fig. 3) from the European border-enforcement

[8] Further, Zetter shows how the fractioning of the refugee label 'drives the claim to refugee status further back into the process of migration – both metaphorically and geographically' (2007: 189).

agency Frontex (2014, 2015), 'illegal border-crossings between BCPs [border crossing points]' by sea (predominantly the Mediterranean) increased sharply in 2011 (Fig. 4), the year associated with the 'Arab spring'.[9] Since a slight drop in 2012, it has steadily increased and in January 2016 a Frontex quarterly report stated that in the first nine months of 2015 there had been 849, 952 'illegal border crossings', mostly across the Aegean Sea (Frontex 2016).[10] However, as noted by Sigona (2015), recorded border crossings are ambiguously conflated with the number of people actually crossing into the EU.

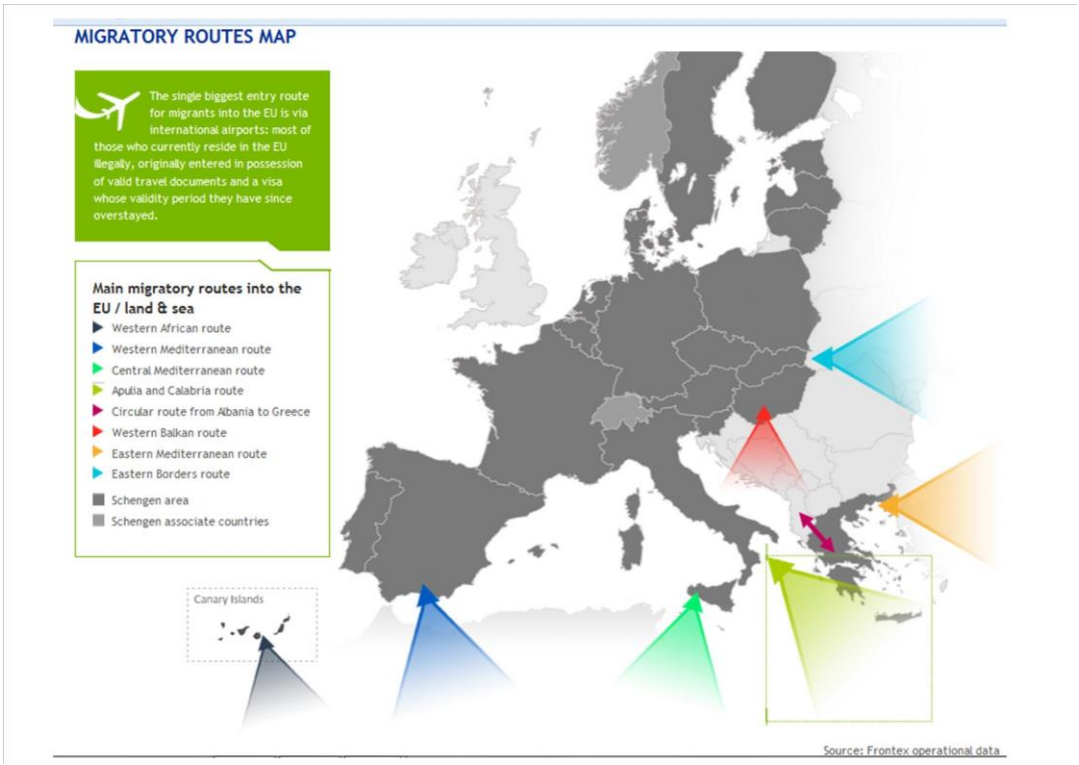

Fig 4. Map of Migratory Routes (Source: Frontex)

Previously conceived as a positive space of interaction and migrating cultures of which 'today's immigrants from the south of the planet, however feared, despised, and victimized by racism and social economic injustice, are the historical reminders' (Chambers 2008: 39), the Mediterranean – like the US-Mexico border – has become a

[9] European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union.
[10] Although all data for 2015 have not yet been released by Frontex, it has widely been reported in the media that figures are over one million for the year 2015 alone (Guardian 22-12-2015).

line of demarcation between prosperous countries and countries plagued by instability and poverty (Lutterbeck 2006: 78). This is starkly illustrated by a widely distributed photograph taken by José Palazón from the Spanish NGO Prodein Melilla. It depicts a group of sub-Saharan migrants sitting on a fence during a border-crossing attempt and overlooking people playing golf inside Melilla (Guardian 23-10-14).

The 1985 Schengen Agreement and the 1986 Single European Act created an area of free circulation for people, goods, capitals and services. This led to 'an incremental dismantling of Europe's internal borders and a strong focus on external control' (Cross 2009: 171). As Boswell has it, 'the resulting loss of national control over borders created the perceived need for "flanking" measures […] aimed at limiting movement *into* the EU or "Schengenland"' (2003: 622). This process was further accelerated by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the 'third pillar' Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), and later the 2009 Lisbon Treaty and the establishment of 'an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice'. The 1999 Tampere Summit saw the emergence of a strong Justice and Home Affairs external dimension (JHAE) 'through which the EU includes JHA issues in its external relations and negotiations with third countries' (Wolff 2008: 255). The Tampere Summit established a programme that institutionalized the externalization of asylum and migration policies and practices at the EU level (Wunderlich 2010: 254), a process further continued by the subsequent Hague (2004-2009) and Stockholm (2010-2014) programmes.

Since the distribution, during the 1998 Austrian presidency of the EU, of a policy document in favour of the instrumentalization of aid to reduce the 'migratory pressure' on the EU (Belguendouz 2005a), third countries are increasingly required to act as EU frontier guards (Clochard *et al.* 2009). A High Level Group on Migration and Asylum was created in 1998 to prepare Action Plans with selected countries of origin and transit such as Morocco and Afghanistan (Boswell 2003). Through forums such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), cooperation with non-member state countries 'in a diverse spectrum of areas including interdiction, border control, readmission, protection capacity building, and even negotiating the idea of "offshore processing centres"' (Betts 2006: 653) has become the cornerstone of EU policies of migration and asylum. Non-member states are in charge of the mission of readmission and retention of their own citizens and are required to organize the control, dissuasion,

tracking down, marginalization, blocking, *de facto refoulement* and sending back of other migrants towards their countries of origin (Belguendouz 2005b).

To negotiate readmission agreements, which have become central to the EU 'carrot and stick approach' (Schuster 2005: 18), the EU trades immigration quotas for the neighbouring countries' nationals as well as aid and other financial arguments (Baldwin-Edwards 2006).[11] The latter are also encouraged to establish agreements with other southern countries to ensure migrants stay closer to their countries of origin (Gil-Bazo 2006). Rather than training in human rights and protection, the capacity building referred to by the EU has meant an intensification of cooperation in policing and militarization activities in and across the Mediterranean (Lutterbeck 2006). Border management was institutionalized in 2004 with the creation of the Frontex agency, the EU border agency that oversees the enforcement of controls at the frontiers and beyond, often in conjunction with third countries' police and military forces (Wolff 2008). In 2013, this security-centred approach was further enforced with the implementation of EUROSUR (the Europe Border Surveillance System).

[11] Wolff notes (2008: 260) that because of member states' conflicting interests, cooperation with third countries occurs bilaterally (e.g. Morocco and Spain; Italy and Libya) as well as through the European Commission.

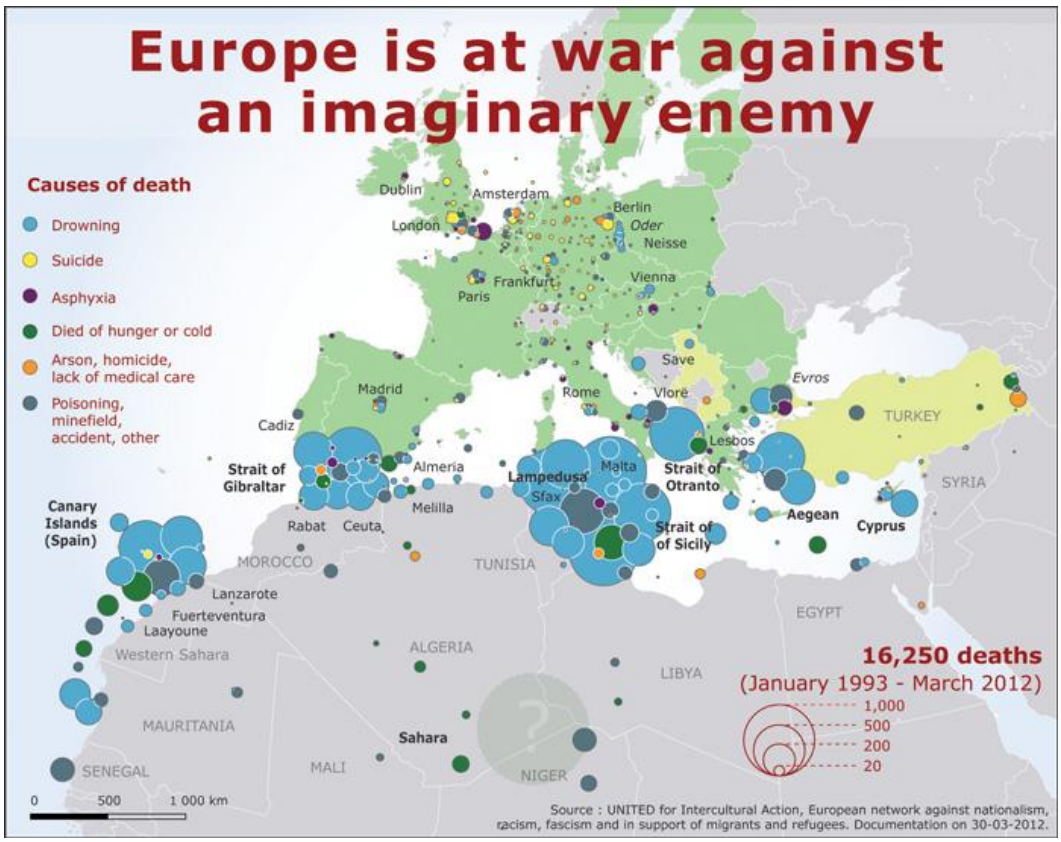

Fig. 5 Frontexit Campaign Map (Source: Frontexit campaign website).

Although justified in the name of migrants' own safety, legally and ethically contentious European operations have increased reliance on smugglers and have resulted in significantly longer and more perilous journeys (Carling 2007).[12] Although activists have long decried deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and protested about the border's militarisation (Fig. 5), shipwrecks, with record losses of lives in the 'migrant graveyard in the Mediterranean' (Vice 23-04-2015), now regularly make headlines.[13] According to the Fortress Europe blog by Italian journalist Del Grande, there have been over 21,400 deaths between 1988 and October 2014. Drawing on data from the Migrants' Files, Amnesty International (2014) claims that between 2000 and summer 2014, over 23,000 migrants lost their lives trying to reach Europe.

[12] For instance, Hyndman and Mountz note the rise of '"neo-*refoulement*", […] the return of asylum seekers and other migrants to transit countries or regions of origin *before* they reach the sovereign territory in which they could make a claim' (2008: 250).

[13] In October 2013 a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa resulted in the loss of 360 lives (BBC News 08/10/13) and sparked the Mare Nostrum Operation by the Italian Navy, replaced one year later by Frontex's less ambitious (and much criticized) rescue Triton Operation. In September 2014, a boat sank off the Maltese coast killing around 500 people (BBC News 15-09-2014). In April 2015, over 700 people were missing after a boat sank just outside Libyan waters (Guardian 19-04-2015).

The declaration of the 2006 Rabat Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development commits states to 'work together following a comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach and respecting the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees' (quoted in Cross 2009: 174). However, according to Baldwin-Edwards, the externalization of European politics of migration and asylum has resulted in an emphasis on the ability of neighbouring countries, especially in North Africa

> to manage all aspects of migration, especially transit migration of people from sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia […]. In particular, the treatment of illegal migrants, returned migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and guest workers have been shown by independent sources to be at best inadequate, at worst profoundly inhuman (2006: 312).

3 Morocco as the 'Gendarme of Europe'?

Collyer *et al*. note that, 'since the 1990s, Morocco has become one of the most significant remittance receivers in the world (2009: 1558). With its long history of circular migration (de Haas 2007b), Morocco has consistently encouraged emigration to relieve social discontent, notably with unemployment levels (McMurray 2001). Yet, de Haas notes that restrictive European policies, especially after the 1973 oil crisis, ironically have interrupted the circular nature of Moroccan migration and stimulated permanent settlement abroad (de Haas 2007b: 49). Another consequence has been the rise of *harragas*,[14] illegal migrants, during the period of economic growth in the 1990s as 'undocumented migrants were attracted by the growing demand for cheap labour in agriculture, construction and the service sector' (de Haas 2007b: 47). The clandestine routes from Morocco reach Spain via the Canary Islands (Fig. 6), through the straits of Gibraltar (only 14 kilometres) as well as Ceuta and Melilla (Fig. 7); Wolff notes that 'while the two autonomous cities are part of the Spanish state and hence eligible for structural funds and other attractive EU policies, on the other side of the fence Moroccan citizens […] remain outsiders dreaming about better prospects' (2008: 261).

[14] From the Arabic word *hrig* for 'burning' (e.g. documents, or more figuratively, borders), 'Harraga ("burners") is the neologism used in the Maghreb and by French media to refer to individuals who emigrate clandestinely' (Abderrezak 2009: 463).

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Border Crossings	31,600	12,500	9,200	2,250	200	340	170	250	275

Fig. 6 'Illegal border crossings on the Western African Route' (to Canary Islands from Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco) (Source: Frontex website).

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Border Crossings	6,500	6,650	5,000	8,450	6,400	6,800	7,840

Fig. 7 'Illegal border crossings on the Western Mediterranean Route' (sea and land crossings from northern Morocco to Spain) (Source: Frontex website).

Cherti and Grant note that Morocco

> has witnessed a new development, its increasing role as a country of transit, even a destination, for migrants from neighbouring states and in particular from sub-Saharan Africa. Since around 2000, in particular, the numbers of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have grown dramatically in response to civil wars, political unrest and economic downturn (2013: 11).

This new development is evidenced by the sharp rise noted by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in the capture of 'Sub-Saharan migrants intercepted by Spanish authorities which jumped from a mere 142 in 1996 to 8,747 in 2002' (Lutterbeck 2006: 62);[15] although according to regular Frontex reports most irregular migrants on this route are north Africans. This illustrates changing migratory trends in the Maghreb region where sub-Saharan migrants are increasingly circulating in search of employment opportunities and/or asylum immigration in the Maghreb and further into Europe. Morocco is no longer solely a country of emigration (de Haas 2006, Alioua 2005).

Carling notes that the Spanish-Moroccan border is 'not only a focal point of significant migration flows, but also the pivot of complex bilateral relations at different levels: between Spain and Morocco, between Southern Europe and the Maghreb, and

[15] Interceptions are approximate indicators of 'clandestine' migration. Using another proxy indicator, APDHA (2006) recounts that, according to Spanish data for 2005, of 368 corpses and reported missing persons, 267 were sub-Saharan, 85 from the Maghreb and 16 from Western Sahara.

between the European Union and Africa' (2007: 338).[16] Although Morocco unsuccessfully requested its adhesion to the EU in 1987, it is increasingly the EU and member States such as Spain that are approaching Morocco in order to subcontract repression against migrants (Belguendouz 2003, 2005b). The 1999 Moroccan Action Plan called on Morocco to criminalize clandestine migration in and out of Morocco (Collyer 2010: 8). Morocco's rejection of what it deemed an essentially repressive plan marked the beginning of intense negotiations.

While most 'illegal' migration comes from Latin America and visa overstaying, Spanish media refer to illegal migration from Morocco as an 'invasion' (Zapata-Barrero and Witte 2007: 88).[17] This issue has become a priority for Spain, notably under the Aznar conservative government (1996-2004) which was instrumental in the drafting of the 1999 'Action Plan'. Despite diplomatic tensions over territorial issues, Spain has maintained a close relationship with Morocco.[18] In 1991, a friendship treaty was signed and led the way to a subsequent modest defence agreement (Gillespie 2002). In 1992, the two countries signed a readmission agreement which was only applied to Moroccan nationals from 1996 onwards (Carling 2007).

Fostering bilateral cooperation has been an integral part of Spain's Plan GRECO, focused on reinforcing border control (Schuster 2005:660).[19] Further, Spain has invested in SIVE to detect and stop the crossing of fishing boats carrying clandestine migrants to its coastlines.[20] The system involves military technologies such as fixed and mobile radar, infrared sensors as well as boats, helicopters, and aeroplanes deployed by Spain in the Mediterranean. Before the creation of Frontex, Spain and the

[16] EU and Spanish negotiations with Morocco have been fraught with tension and influenced by parallel debates such as the Western Sahara issue, negotiation of Morocco's 'advanced status' with the EU (Kausch 2009) as well as energy contracts and fishing agreements (Gillespie 2002).
[17] Gillespie notes that 'northward migrations are, in a complex and indirect way, still bound up in many Spanish minds with the long historical experience of Muslim occupation from the eight to the fifteenth century' (2002: 3).
[18] Spain does not recognize the Moroccan 'occupation' (since 1975) of its previous colony, Western Sahara. Further, Ceuta and Melilla (on the Moroccan coast) have been Spanish since 1580 and 1497 respectively. Morocco has laid claims to both territories since the 1950s (Zapata-Barrero and Witte 2007: 86).
[19] Global de Regulacion y Coordinacion de la Extranjer'ia y la immigracion en Espana (Overall Program for the Control and Coordination of Non-National and Immigration in Spain).
[20] Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior (Integrated System of Vigilance).

UK led Operation Ulysses in 2003 to prevent clandestine migration to the Canary Islands with a flotilla of warships (Lutterbeck 2006: 68).

Porous until Spain's accession to the EU and the introduction of visas for Moroccans in 1991, the land borders around Ceuta and Melilla have also been fortified under the Aznar Government with 'double fences of up to six metres in height, dotted with optic and acoustic sensor devices, watchtowers, and surveillance cameras' (Carling 2007: 324). Spain, backed by the EU, responded to the 2005 'attacks' by 'increasing police presence, rebuilding and heightening the damaged fences (in addition to planning the building of a third)' (Zapata-Barrero and Witte 2007: 87). Although until then Morocco had not often agreed to readmit sub-Saharan migrants, it made some more concessions after the autumn 2005 events (Carling 2007). The expansion and redoubled efficiency of SIVE along the Atlantic coast significantly decreased crossing attempts towards the Canary Islands, which had increased after the 2005 events (Fig. 6 above). Migration attempts from North Morocco to the coast between Tarifa and Cadiz as well as pressure on Ceuta and Melilla increased (Fig. 8).

Year	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**
arrests	5,556	2,000	2,553	1,210	1,108	1,567	3,342	2,841	4,235

Fig. 8 Number of irregular migrants' arrests at Ceuta and Melilla according to Spanish Interior Minister (Source: APDHA 2013).

As Cherti and Grant have it, 'through a combination of political pressure and financial assistance, the EU has effectively outsourced much of its border management to Morocco. Morocco has received substantial flows of European funding to support Europe's policy of containment' (2013: 13). For instance, de Haas notes that in the MEDA ('Accompanying Measures') program, devised by the EU to support economic transition in Morocco, considerable sums are aimed at curbing migration: 'Of the total MEDA aid budget of 426 million euros for 2000-2006, 115 million euros […] are being spent to "break out of the circle of weak growth, unemployment, poverty, and migration" through support for the control of illegal immigration and rural development programs' (2005).

However, EU-Moroccan cooperation has been criticized as one-sided and unequal (Cherti and Grant 2013). The Spanish-Moroccan readmission agreement was brought into force only in 2012 with the deportation to Morocco (instead of countries of origin) without recourse to a judge of seventy-three sub-Saharan migrants from a small Spanish 'rock' located fifty metres off the Moroccan coast (APDHA 2013). Scholars and activists such as Belguendouz have denounced Morocco's taking up of the role of 'Gendarme of Europe' (2005b: 12). Morocco has extended its adaptation to European politics of migration with the adoption in 2003 of a law on the entry and stay of migrants in Morocco (otherwise known as Law 02/03), largely influenced by the repressive 1945 French legislation on migration. Ironically most of the content of Law 02/03 was present in the 1999 Action Plan that was rejected by Morocco as too repressive.

Denouncing Morocco's shortcomings regarding its obligations as a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, Wunderlich (2010) observes that whilst Moroccan officials seem to acknowledge that Morocco has become a country of immigration,

> abuses of migrants' human rights continue along with Morocco's reluctance to build up an asylum system. EU actors should ask themselves whether this 'narrow' policy convergence is sufficient for a policy agenda that also emphasizes EU humanitarian ambitions in accordance with international obligations. Migrants in transit to Europe might indeed be worse off now than before EU cooperation with Morocco (2010: 266).

NGOs in Morocco expressed similar concerns when on 7th June 2013, Morocco and nine EU member states signed a 'Mobility Partnership'. Crucially, the text entails a return to negotiations over the readmission agreement with the EU. As migration scholar Belguendouz describes in a recent opinion piece: 'In other words, Morocco is asked to take on the role of the gendarme of Europe to stop migration flows. A role Morocco has always refused to assume (officially) and, according to us, should continue to reject in respect for human rights' (Belguendouz 2013). On the same day the Mobility Partnership was signed in Strasbourg, human rights associations held a press conference in Rabat to denounce it as not only illusory for the majority of Moroccans, but leading to increasingly xenophobic and discriminatory politics towards African citizens (Bachelet 2013). As described above, the summer of 2013 saw a dramatic increase in repression and police brutality against irregular, sub-Saharan migrants, especially in the northern borderlands, with numerous documented

deaths (GADEM 2013; Bachelet 2014a). GADEM and other associations protecting migrants compiled a 'Report on the Application in Morocco of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families' (GADEM *et al.* 2013b) to be presented at the 19th session of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of all migrant workers and their families in September 2013. The report states that since the end of 2011 there has been a considerable outbreak of institutional violence against sub-Saharan migrants in the main cities, particularly in the North. It also points to the risk of deterioration of this situation due to the security-orientated approach which predominates at the head of the collaboration between Morocco, the EU and its members states in the 'fight against illegal migration. Further, the report illustrates

> the lack of efficiency, in practice, of certain fundamental guarantees provided by the Convention. In detail, those are relating to the right to life, security, work, education or health, effective remedy, fair trial and wider access to justice, especially when it comes to those who are in an irregular administrative situation (GADEM *et al.* 2013: 1).[21]

A few weeks after the end of my fieldwork, the CNDH (National Council of Human Rights) also released its own report (CNDH 2013) asking for a 'radically new politics of asylum and migration' in Morocco. The report disavowed and heavily criticized Morocco's policies of migration, deemed too security-oriented. In a *coup de théâtre*, the report was quickly endorsed by a communiqué from the royal cabinet. King Mohamed VI gave instructions for the elaboration of 'a new vision for a national migration policy, that is humanist in its philosophy, responsible in its approach and pioneering at a regional level' (Maroc Portal 2013). Measures have included calls for the regularisation of irregular migrants as well as the setting up of a national asylum system. In the Conclusion to this thesis, I return to this 'new' politics of migration.

III Analytical Framework

As Black has it, 'illegality' does not stem 'from an intrinsic quality' (2003: 42). Rather, as stressed by Samers, 'illegal immigration is *produced*. There can be no illegal immigration without immigration policy' (Samers 2004: 28). Drawing on Miller's concept of 'virtualism' (Miller 1998), which refers to the transformation of everyday

[21] My translation.

economy to fit a preconceived economic model, Samers claims that the EU is attempting to halt a phenomenon it has itself created through increased controls and shrunken visa opportunities. Similarly, De Genova argues that 'undocumented migrations […] are not self-generating and random; they are produced and patterned. […] The law defines the parameters of its own operations, engendering the conditions of possibility for "legal" as well as "illegal" practices' (De Genova 2002: 424). Hence, to analyse 'illegality' as a (multiplicity of) juridical status(es), more attention is needed to the mechanisms that create the conditions for the 'illegalization' of migrants, and their historicity. For instance, Coutin's (2000) work on irregular, Salvadorian migrants in the US is an ethnography of a legal process rather than of a predefined group.

I concur with scholars who sustain that it is crucial 'to take illegality as an object of theoretical and ethnographic analysis in itself' (Willen 2005: 65). For instance, Andersson, highlighting the profits and productive aspects of border regimes rather than their violence, examines 'the products and excesses of an "illegality industry"' (Andersson 2014: 8). Focusing on the harmonising of EU migration policy as well as its management, what he calls the 'migration apparatus', Feldman explores the 'acephalous world of EU migration politics' (Feldman 2002). Whilst the latter is concerned with 'nonconnection between people' (Feldman 2012: 4), in the present study I am concerned with illegality as a set of 'everyday, embodied experiences of being-in-the-world' (Willen 2007: 10). I draw on what Coutin, in her seminal work on the exclusion and struggles of irregular Salvadoran migrants in the US, has labelled 'the space of non-existence' (Coutin 2000: 29) to describe how irregular migrants are conflated with criminals 'outside both the law and the social body' (*ibid*). However, as Coutin puts it, 'nonexistence […] is often incomplete in that migrants, refugees, dissidents, and death-squad targets continue to live, work, eat, play, visit, and so forth' (2000: 27). I examine how migrants cope with living as irregular migrants in Morocco when crossing to Spain and Europe has become increasingly difficult.

Despite an increase in need for labour migrants in Europe, policies and political discourses about migration have remained overtly protectionist. Yet, for scholars such as Baldwin-Edwards, illegal migration and employment 'have emerged as fundamental structural components of modern capitalism' (2008: 1457). Fargues notes that migrants 'form an underemployed, under-protected, and often over-skilled source

of manpower […], a modern form of what Karl Marx called the "reserve army of labor"' (2009: 574). References to 'Fortress Europe' have come under criticism, especially by proponents of the concept of 'autonomy of migration' (Casa-Cortes *et al.* 2015, Bojadžijev and Karakayali 2010) who 'understand "illegality" not as a legal (non-)status, but as an actively produced, albeit contested, condition that aims at disciplining migrants to a docile, flexible and exploitable workforce by rendering them "deportable"' (Scheel 2003: 581-2; see also De Genova and Peutz 2010). In their efforts to provide 'a new critical vocabulary' (2015: 60) in migration studies, such scholars have articulated the concept of 'differential exclusion' to examine 'the link between migration control and regimes of labour management that create different degrees of precarity, vulnerability and freedom by granting and closing access to resources and rights according to economic, individualizing, and racist rationales' (De Genova *et al.* 2015: 79; see also Mezzadra and Nielson 2013).

I agree with proponents of the concept of 'autonomy of migration', which suggests that 'any reduction of migration to structural underlying causes ignores the subjective desires and projects migrants pursue with their migrations, thereby eliminating the political moments migratory movements compromise' (Scheel 2013: 579). I draw on Squire and others who have examined how migrants challenge what it 'means to be political' (Squire 2011: 5). However, I argue that such perspectives need to account for migrants' complex, uncertain and sometimes seemingly contradictory political projects, which cannot always be reduced to citizenship.

Further, in her review of '*Escape Routes*' (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008), Sharma criticizes the autonomy of migration perspective for 'centering the "figure of the migrant" instead of actual migrants in all their multiplicity' (2009: 474). She argues that such a perspective 'allows us to readily ignore […] the meanings [migrants] give to their lives, meanings that may neither be in concert with those we would like them to be the standard bearers of, such as "escape," nor the meanings imposed on them by ruling groups' (*ibid*). Certainly, it is crucial to critically examine dominant categories such as 'illegal migrant'. As argued by Agier in his study of refugee camps, the researcher ought not to confuse 'the object of research with that of the intervener who creates this space and this category' (2011: 68). Furthermore, as noted by Hage (2005),

the plethora of concepts and notions in migration studies are not always ethnographically grounded or relevant.

Rather than adding to this profusion of abstract concepts, I propose to engage with emic notions articulated by my own informants. In Taqaddoum, my sub-Saharan respondents identified as 'adventurers' rather than 'illegal migrants'. Here, I draw on Bredeloup's work on adventure (2013; see also Pian 2009). Bredeloup suggests that, '"to venture off" [means] escaping in order to find life [and] construct oneself in an enduring fashion […]' (2013: 180). Adventurers try to break from the monotony of everyday life and become masters of their own destiny whilst Africa is immerged in deep social and economic crises. Nevertheless, as Navaro-Yashin warns us, 'anthropologists must work against the normalizing discourses even of their informants' (2003: 109). I do not suggest adventure as an analytical term or a 'figure' (Bredeloup 2008: 474). I also problematize the term 'adventurer' and highlight some of its pitfalls by exploring moral conundrums for migrants in Morocco.

Exploring irregular, sub-Saharan migrants' 'adventure' in Morocco illustrates the issue with Sheller and Urry's observation that 'all the world seems to be on the move' (2006: 207). Recently, numerous scholars across cultural and social science studies have described the rise of a 'mobility turn' (Sheller and Urry 2006, Urry 2007) which is described as fundamentally transformative by 'putting into question the fundamental "territorial" and "sedentary" precepts of twentieth-century social science' (Hannam *et al.* 2006: 2).

Over the past decades, reconsiderations of notions of space and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) have figured prominently in anthropology. Such studies, in highlighting a sort of 'sedentarist analytical bias' (Malkki 1995a: 508) which privileges 'rooting rather than travel' (Clifford 1988: 338) have provided valuable contributions. However, I agree with Salazar and Smart when they note that whilst previously movements tended to be ignored by scholars or considered as deviations from normative localized communities, 'discourses of globalization, and cosmopolitanism […] seem to have shifted the pendulum in the opposite direction, mobility being promoted as normality, and place attachment as a digression or resistance against globalizing forces' (2011: ii). For instance, Navaro-Yashin notes how studies in the anthropology of globalisation such as Appadurai's (1996) work

have focused on how transnationalism supposedly promotes mobility and flexibility (Ong 1999), but fail to account for how it also engenders 'immobility, entrapment, confinement, incarceration' (2003: 108). As noted by Carling in his study of emigration from Cape Verde, given 'the degree of conflict over mobility and the frustration about immobility among people in many traditional countries of emigration... one might ask if our times are not also "the age of involuntary immobility"' (2002: 5). Similarly, in his articulation of the 'enclave society', Turner argues that whilst 'there may be an increasing global flow of goods and services, there is emerging a parallel "immobility regime" exercising surveillance and control over migrants, refugees and other aliens' (2007: 288).

Mobility is neither a new phenomenon nor simply akin to increased equality. Salazar and Smart note that the crucial issue pertains not to whether there is a rise or a decline of mobility, but to 'how such mobility has been formed, regulated, and distributed around different regions and areas and how the formation, regulation, and distribution of such mobility are shaped and patterned by existing social, political, and economic structures of the contemporary world' (2011: v). Examining irregular sub-Saharan migration in Morocco requires analytical tools that transcend simple dichotomies such as mobility and immobility to account for the complex ways entrapments and movements are constitutive of migrants' experiences in Morocco, without denying migrants' agency and ignoring 'frictions' (Tsing 2005). For instance, I explore the problematic notion of 'transit' migration (Collyer *et al.* 2012; Düvell 2012) by focusing on migrants' desires, imaginations and aspirations – which they did not discuss in terms of a fixed destination but as the 'objective' (*l'objectif*) of 'adventure', the imperative 'to look for one's life' (*chercher sa vie*).

Yet, whenever Sub-Saharan migrants organised border-crossing attempts – which they called 'shocking the border' – they were uncertain of the outcome. Migrants often had to rely on one another, but their trust in other adventurers could be deceived. As Kelly has it, 'What is significant is not that people are unsure about what to do, or whether to trust people in front of them, but that they find ways to overcome these hesitations' (2015: 187). I draw on scholars such as Cooper and Patten who have examined uncertainty not merely 'in its negative and constraining sense' but as 'a productive and investigative cue' (2015: 2-3). For instance, in examining doubt 'as a

technical matter' (2015: 1) in rituals and law, Berti *et al.* focus on different 'techniques for casting and dispelling doubt, and the role they play in achieving verdicts or decisions that appear both valid and just' (2015: 10). In discussing my informants' notion of '*chance'* (see Chapter 5), I explore how sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum channelled their doubts and hoped to reach what they called the 'objective'.

In her examination of temporalities and hope in Polish migration, Pine argues that migration 'can be both a symbol and an enactment of hope and of faith in the future and an act of or a reaction to hopelessness, despair, and acute loss in the present' (2014: 96). For Pine, 'hope is a complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change, and to some extent on uncertainty' (2014: 96). Adventure, for my informants, embodied their hope for a better future where their 'objective' would be realised. As Bloch puts it, 'hopelessness is itself, in a temporal and factual sense, the most insupportable thing, downright intolerable to human needs' (1959: 5). My informants' violent and uncertain predicaments did not entail desperate, passive waiting.

However, although in the face of despair hope may sustain life, I concur with Zournazi that hope is not merely about things to come; rather, '[i]t is the drive or energy that embeds us in the world – in the ecology of life, ethics and politics. But it is also to do with power relations – the economic aspirations of what life is "meant to be"' (2002: 14-15). I am particularly interested in the potential for transformation brought about by sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, even though many continue trying to cross to Europe. I draw on Agier who, reversing Agamben's (1998) assertion that the camp has replaced the *polis,* analyses innovative social as well as political life emerging in refugee camps, and asks whether a refugee camp has the potential to become a city in the sense of both an urban space and a political space, an *urbs* and a *polis* (2002: 322). In examining adventure in Taqaddoum, I pay attention to how, despite illegality, immobility and uncertainty, 'real life is constructed […] as a social life that is largely resilient and transformative' (Agier 2011: 86).

IV Methods

Initially, I intended to undertake a multi-sited (Marcus 1995) ethnographic study of migrants' self-organisation in forest camps and urban dwellings during transit through Morocco towards Europe. After intensive language classes in Moroccan Arabic in Fez (November 2011 – May 2012), I planned on spending time first in Rabat and then in Oujda, Tangier and Nador. To secure access to sub-Saharan migrants, I sought the collaboration of NGOs working with immigrant populations (Núñez and Heyman 2007: 362).

However, my efforts at gaining access to NGOs in Rabat were met with reticence. There was no space to accommodate me as a volunteer, especially because I had no specialized skills (e.g. medical or juridical) which could directly benefit over-burdened NGOs such as Caritas, a humanitarian organisation associated with the Catholic Church. I was unaware that many NGOs had been solicited increasingly by students and researchers interested in sub-Saharan migration. In fact, some representatives of NGOs pointed out that studying sub-Saharan migration in Morocco was becoming 'trendy', to the detriment of other issues in Morocco.

The bulk of my efforts were directed at GADEM, a small Moroccan association offering mostly legal support to migrants in Morocco. Its coordinator, Camille, pointed to issues of confidentiality when explaining that GADEM could not host me. After I outlined my project, Camille retorted that the Moroccan authorities appealed to an emphasis on 'transit' to deny sub-Saharan migrants' integration in Morocco and to ignore their rights. Prior to meeting Camille, I had encountered another member of GADEM, and gauchely explained I was interested in migrants' networks of support – forgetting that *réseaux* (French for 'networks') is mostly used to refer to smugglers' networks. My research interests seemed very suspicious.

Researchers I met pointed out that organisations such as UNHCR and GADEM had volatile relations with migrants, and advised me that identifying and directly engaging with sub-Saharans on the street would be much more effective. Though I was initially unconvinced about the practicality of this advice, I had a series of serendipitous encounters soon after settling in Rabat, and was soon introduced to Pierre – a Cameroonian migrant who was the president of the Collectif des Communautés sub-Sahariennes au Maroc (CCSM) and whom I quickly befriended.

Since I had not much to do in my first weeks in Rabat, Pierre brought me to a theatre workshop focused on *interculturalité* he had set up with an American student and just over fifteen young sub-Saharan and Moroccan participants. As a bait, he pointed out that some were in an irregular situation.

Through this two-month workshop, I became friends with Lamine, a Burkinabe migrant, and Youssef, a young Moroccan, who both lived on the same street in Maadid near Taqaddoum.[22] Between rehearsals, I spent time in Lamine's room, chatting with the other migrants living in the same derelict flat, and hanging out with Youssef and his friends working in the market.[23] Pierre took me around NGOs, especially Caritas, to request funding for the theatre project. After our visits to Pierre-Marie, then coordinator at Caritas, Pierre introduced me to other migrants, like Picas from the mostly Cameroonian ghetto *L'Embassade*.

Anticipating that it would take still more time to establish relationships with migrants in Rabat, I decided to spend the full fieldwork period in the capital city. After briefly considering focusing one nationality (i.e. Cameroonian), like Pian (2009) with Senegalese migrants in Morocco, I decided instead to focus my ethnographic study in Taqaddoum (especially Douar Hajja and Maadid). Taqaddoum became an obvious choice for what Candea, in response to the pitfalls he identifies with multi-sited ethnography, calls 'an arbitrary location' (2007). There was a sizable population of sub-Saharan migrants and a lot of movement to and from the borderlands. To examine issues around mobility, bounding my fieldwork to one site and keeping in touch with people moving around Morocco seemed a more efficient method than following migrants in their sinuous journeys. Staying in one neighbourhood was also crucial to examine relations with Moroccans.

During the bulk of my fieldwork (June 2012 – August 2013), spent mostly in Taqaddoum's 'ghettoes', I witnessed the birth of a migrants' association (ALECMA). I always made clear I was a student and a researcher, not a lawyer or a spy (Baujard 2005: 125), nor an NGO worker who could assist in the level of support my informants might be receiving. Though I was offered the post of vice-president of ALECMA, I

[22] My Moroccan informants' names have been changed to protect their anonymity in the light of the critical comments they make about the Moroccan government.
[23] This theatre workshop was only instrumental in gaining access to some of my informants. It remained peripheral to both the fieldwork and focus of this thesis.

refused to accept, agreeing instead to the title of 'advisor' – along with Pierre. In articulating her challenging notion of 'militant anthropology', Scheper-Hughes argues that as anthropologists 'we can make ourselves available […] as *comrades* (with all the demands and responsibilities that this word implies) to the people who are the subjects of our writings, whose lives and miseries provide us with a livelihood' (1995: 420). With this exhortation in mind, I took an active part in the activities of the organisation, especially helping my friend Eric William writing reports. Although my own involvement was instrumental to some transformations within ALECMA (e.g. the shift to a focus on migrants' rights), I took care to help my informants formulate their own ideas and 'objectives'; this focus is strangely absent from recent calls for a 'militant research' in migration aimed at 'scrutiniz[ing] and counteract[ing] the paradigm of an all-encompassing governance of mobility and unpack[ing] the fantasies this paradigm entails and engenders' (Garelli and Tazzioli 2013: 247).

Yet, the blatant inequality between my status and sub-Saharan migrants' as migrants in Morocco was sometimes a cause of tension. A young Cameroonian said to me, 'You're a student and your job is to write what I am telling you? My job is to carry bags of cement all day.' More often though, it became a topic of reflection, sometimes with bitter irony. Discussing the notion of 'adventure' brought up by my Ivoirian migrants, I pointed that I also had left my home country, France, to seek opportunities in the UK. Someone pointed I was not 'an adventurer', but 'a misadventurer' (*un mésaventurier*), highlighting that travelling within Europe entailed 'no suffering'.

Though I never paid respondents for information, my informants were living in precarious conditions and I had to respond to numerous demands for help to eat, pay the rent or even travel to the borderlands. I treated each demand on an *ad hoc* basis, but there were obviously limits to what I could do – something my Ivoirian informant Perez ironically pointed out when he told me, 'you put the honey in our mouth but you don't give us the lemon with it.' Perez often repeated '*à chacun son Français*' (each to his own French), a phrase heard during the Ivoirian electoral crisis expressing resentment at French intervention. I would reply '*à chacun son Ivoirien*.' Although a joke, it illustrated that if there were gains possible in hanging out with me, I was the one who needed those relationships the most. Such relationships, and

enduring ethical concerns, have not ceased since I have left the field as I am still in contact with many of my main informants.

There were further dissonances between our respective statuses as migrants in Morocco. Although the problematic term 'expat' would more often be attributed to me, I did not live in a 'ghetto' in Taqaddoum but rented a flat in the city centre. Originally, the decision to live in the city centre near the train station was informed by initial research plans involving multiple research sites in Morocco and within Rabat's agglomeration. In any case, the traditional ethnographic practice of living closely with informants was nearly impossible. Staying with migrants in overcrowded and derelict accommodation would have amounted to a sham attempt at erasing structural inequalities for the purpose of the research; further it could have increased risks for migrants. Moving somewhere else in Taqaddoum could have been helpful. However, keeping some space between where I stayed and the fieldwork site proved quite valuable in coping with the stress brought by the research topic. Further, some of my informants were also keen on visiting me in the city centre, or to go to the beach. Similarly, since my fieldwork corresponded with a renewal of police violence against sub-Saharan migrants, I decided not to visit the forest camps around Ceuta and Melilla with my informants in order not to further endanger them.

Staying outside of Taqaddoum also meant I had a place where I could talk to some of my informants with much more privacy. Migrants shared rooms with many people, and it was not always safe to go and sit on the streets because of police raids or violent Moroccan neighbours. I moved into a new flat towards the end of my fieldwork, in the modest neighbourhood of *L'Océan*, with Stéphane, who worked on legal issues at GADEM. Stéphane, Eric William and I became close friends and the house hosted many valuable discussions. Our trio was also at the heart of a close working relationship that developed between ALECMA and GADEM. Ironically, towards the end of my fieldwork, I became a member of GADEM too.

In Taqaddoum, gaining access to migrants through ALECMA and initial contacts I made was not without issues. Overall, the ethnography is primarily drawing on informal discussions and semi-informal interviews with a core of approximately twenty sub-Saharan and seven Moroccan informants (and a wider network composed of their friends and roommates) with whom I met almost daily in 'ghettoes' and on the

streets of Taqaddoum – when migrants were not in the borderlands – as well as numerous NGO workers and representatives of other migrants' organisations. However, despite my best efforts, I had very limited contact with Anglophone migrants.[24] Also, although in Taqaddoum female migrants and families are far less numerous than men travelling alone, they are under-represented in this thesis. As a European, male researcher, it was difficult to create and sustain relationships with female, sub-Saharan migrants. Aside from one main informant (Marmiton, a Cameroonian woman), most attempts were unsuccessful. My informants were predominantly male, in their twenties or early thirties (with a few unaccompanied minors and a few informants over forty) and mostly Cameroonian and Ivoirian as well as Malian, Guinean and Burkinabe.

Confidentiality and safety have been a constant concern during and after fieldwork. Migrants were concerned about me 'boxing their polo', that is spoiling or revealing their secrets. For some, this injunction was meant very broadly and sometimes pointed to their refusal to see the 'true realities' of their living conditions in Morocco exposed, especially to the attention of their friends and families who have not undertaken the adventure. However, as Scheper-Hughes suggests, anthropologists don't necessarily have 'a responsibility to honor *community* secrets' (2007: 126). Not describing the living conditions shared by irregular sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco would make any research on the subject impossible. Yet, many did not want families to be able to recognize them and see in what conditions their friends and relatives lived. The thesis is illustrated with pictures I took during fieldwork, but none of the faces of the featured migrants can be identified on them. In fact, they were taken with this problem in mind so as to avoid having to blur them or use other editing tools.

Throughout the thesis, I have used pseudonyms and altered some biographical details to protect the anonymity of my Moroccan informants, who frequently have very harsh words against the King and the government and could be identified. Regarding my sub-Saharan informants, this issue was discussed when securing oral consent from them. Common formal procedures such as written consent forms were not

[24] Although there was a substantial presence of Nigerians, Anglophone migrants were visibly less numerous than Francophone migrants in Taqaddoum. Yet, there are no available figures to give more precise estimates. Also, not all migrants were fluent in either French or English. The direct quotations from my sub-Saharan informants are all translated from French to English.

implemented as they 'may expose participants to increased risk, arouse mistrust and suspicion of researchers, and undermine the possibility for negotiating genuine ethical engagement with participants' (Mackenzie *et al.* 2007: 306). Throughout the thesis, I use the (nick)names my informants themselves preferred me to employ.

I did not seek a research visa for fear that my interest in irregular migration might attract attention from authorities. I exited and returned the country every three months so as not to need a visa, something I was told later on by Stéphane was probably an 'abuse of rights' although Moroccan authorities were far more concerned with sub-Saharan migration. Some of my informants were intimidated by the police because of their political activities. Pierre's room was broken into several times by 'thieves' who were mostly interested in NGO reports and even name tags from conferences on migration. Other informants were briefly arrested.

Although the police did not need me to locate migrants' houses, my fieldnotes contained no information which could help localize the places where migrants stayed – my attempt at drawing a map was curtailed by a lack of the necessary skills as well as considerations of safety. Border-crossing strategies were not the focus of my research and the information discussed here about routes and camps in the borderlands is already available in the existing literature. I decided not to attempt interviewing Moroccan authorities in order to avoid unnecessary risks to my informants. Safety during fieldwork was also a concern as Taqaddoum has a reputation of being a violent and dangerous neighbourhood – although this is often exaggerated. I relied on my Moroccan and sub-Saharan informants' knowledge to navigate the neighbourhood. As noted by Kovats-Bernat, whilst ethical guidelines are informed by the fallacious assumption that anthropologists are always in control of the field, the latter are 'more likely to rely on local knowledge and the protection extended by interlocutors or other locals in order to safeguard [their] welfare' (2002: 214).

V Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1: What kind of political organisation is possible for irregular migrants living in Taqaddoum? After providing some general details about Taqaddoum and its sub-Saharan inhabitants, I demonstrate that although some of them had applied for asylum, this resulted in very little difference in their overall treatment as unwanted, irregular

migrants in Morocco. Then, I describe the birth and first year of ALECMA, an association set up by irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in one of Taqaddoum's ghettoes. Here, I am particularly interested in what kind of political organisation is possible for irregular migrants and how complex, and sometimes seemingly contradictory, demands cannot be reduced to an issue of citizenship in a host state. I examine how the vague 'objectives' of ALECMA and its focus on 'three-dimensions' (i.e. to support migrants wanting to return, stay and move on) mirrored the adventurers' 'objective' in their quest to 'find their life' and better opportunities.

Chapter 2: What kind of housing arrangements existed in Taqaddoum for (and by) migrants? In this Chapter, I explore how, despite being the subject of increased attention from authorities across the Mediterranean, irregular sub-Saharan migrants were largely left to organise themselves. With some references to the forest camps, I focus more particularly on 'ghettoes' and 'foyers' in Taqaddoum, and describe how the pattern changed gradually from large, over-crowded ghettoes to smaller informal housing arrangements. The term 'home' was still problematic for my informants.

Chapter 3: How did migrants and Moroccans live together? By focusing on everyday life for my Moroccan informants, I emphasize experiences of entrapment and curbed opportunities as well as expectations of a better future, possibly in Europe, which echo similar issues faced by sub-Saharan migrants and discussed throughout the thesis. Then, I examine the interplay of violence and racism in Taqaddoum as well as solidarity between Moroccans and Sub-Saharans. Although tensions were palpable and Moroccans and sub-Saharans alike described such relationships as 'unpredictable', there was also scope for more 'hopeful encounters' in this marginal neighbourhood.

Chapter 4: What does it mean when my informants say that they want to stay, return and go forward in the same sentence? In order to critically engage with the issue of transit migration in Morocco, I focus on migrants' imaginations and aspirations by examining how migrants described their migratory journey as an 'adventure'. More particularly, I explore the idea of the 'objective' – one of the two components of 'adventure' as described by my informants, to allow for a more dynamic examination of journeys when migration studies concepts such as transit do not fit well with either migrants' experiences or desires.

Chapter 5: How did migrants cope with the uncertain outcome of their border-crossing attempts? In Taqaddoum and beyond, migrants' everyday lives and future were characterized by deep uncertainties. In this Chapter, I explore what they meant when saying that adventure was about '*chance*'. In focusing more particularly on how sub-Saharan migrants reflected on the fragile but necessary balance between contingent forces and their ability to act in order 'not to become mad', I pay attention to the issue of hope in such uncertain migratory journeys.

Chapter 6: Why is Taqaddoum the locus of multiplying businesses set up by irregular migrants? In this chapter, I describe the economic precariousness of migrants and detail some of their work opportunities, which they often labelled 'forced labour' or 'slavery'. I pay particular attention to the issue of self-employment in ghettoes. More than simply livelihood strategies, I focus on how irregular migrants' businesses illustrate how the 'objective' of 'looking for one's self' could potentially be realised in Morocco, although the 'conditions' were often described as insufficient for staying by my informants.

Chapter 7: Are trust and solidarity possible for migrants living in precarious conditions? In this Chapter, I examine some of my informants' moral dilemmas by exploring the issue of 'suffering' – the second main component in my informants' description of adventure. I discuss how migrants lived neither in a Hobbesian nightmare nor a utopian 'communitas', as they needed one another to continue their journeys but their 'objectives' often remained tied to their families. A recognition of a common 'suffering' and the right 'mentality' to cope with it were both the basis and the limit for trust and solidarity amongst adventurers.

Chapter 1 'Fighting clandestine migration' in Taqaddoum

'We lived like kings in Oujda. Everyone enjoyed the environment and the debates. Now, it is […] back to Nottingham's *beignets*', Perez bemoaned, toying with a piece of fried dough. It was early October in 2012; we were sat on *L'Embassade*'s roof-top with members of ALECMA – the association of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum that had been set up over the summer. Most of us were ill because of faulty air-conditioning on the night-train from Oujda where we had attended a two-day forum organised by the *Forum Social Maghrebin* (FSM) focused on migration, itself a preparatory event for the upcoming 2013 World Social Forum (*Forum Social Mondial*) in Tunis.

Perez and the others were used to hiding on trains back from Oujda following a failed border crossing 'attempt' and deportation. This time, the travel conditions had been more comfortable, with free train tickets provided by the FSM committee. However, barely twenty-four hours after we had separated at Rabat-Ville station, the overall enthusiasm was giving way to a more dejected mood. In contrast with hopeful and passionate debates about rights and migration in Oujda, Taqaddoum looked much the same and the rent, a worry before we left, was still due for the inhabitants of *L'Embassade*.

Along with more established migrant associations such as *Conseil des Migrants Sub-Sahariens au Maroc* (CMSM or *Le Conseil*) and *Le Collectif des Communautes Sub-Sahariennes au Maroc* (CCSM or *Le Collectif*), as well as the newly-founded trade union *ODT-Migrants*, migrants from ALECMA had engaged with human rights NGOs from both sides of the Mediterranean, including Moroccan migrants' associations in France. They vociferously shared the daily, violent ordeal they 'endured' in Morocco and listened with interest to participants talking about migrants' rights. Many activists, including migrant leaders from *ODT-Migrants*, were calling for the regularisation (Fig. 9) of all irregular migrants in Morocco – something ALECMA members had not discussed together during their weekly Sunday afternoon meetings in *L'Embassade*.

Fig. 9 Banner for the regularisation of migrants in the Maghreb at Oujda Forum.

We discussed the confusion, amongst other participants, over the association's name. ALECMA stood for '*Association Lutte contre l'Emigration Clandestine au Maroc* [Fighting against Clandestine Emigration to Morocco Association]', which puzzled Moroccan and European activists and NGO workers. Perez, taking notes of the debriefing as General Secretary of ALECMA, said 'my combat is about regularisation. It is to fight inequalities and injustice. Regularisation is an important idea which we did not master before the forum. Some people told us, "ALECMA, you are fighting against us migrants!" But no, we just want to reduce the percentage [of irregular migrants]'. In Oujda, I overheard discussions between ALECMA members and other participants baffled by the idea of 'reducing the percentage'. In *L'Embassade*, they were now discussing new ideas. For Chimita, 'the good cause is not only fighting against migration; we also need to insist on the fight for the rights of the clandestine migrants.'

Henceforth, they were not sure anymore whether the name 'ALECMA' was suitable. Eric William, echoing one prominent idea from the forum's debates, asserted 'we cannot stop migration. Morocco is not a country of transit but of residency.' Others wanted the association's name to include 'rights of migrants' and recalled that Moroccan activists living in France encouraged them to include the term '*sans*-

papiers'. Everyone agreed except ALECMA President Patrick, who protested that these issues were covered by ALECMA's vague 'three dimensions' ('*les trois volets*'): staying in Morocco, returning home, and continuing to Europe or elsewhere. We were all re-considering ALECMA's acronym when Ali broke the silence: 'we are the "Association against Migrants' Rights"!' Amidst the enthusiastic cheers, because I feared this may add further to the confusion, I asked whether they meant 'for' rather than 'against' migrants' rights. The choice of a new name was postponed until the next Sunday meeting when other members, especially Picas, the founding President of ALECMA, would be present.

At the next meeting, some members expressed unease about changing the name of the association just as they had started to get known. Guillaumar suggested the acronym was kept the same and proposed replacing 'fighting' for 'shedding light' by changing the meaning of one letter in the French acronym. There was an enthusiastic round of applause for Guillaumar, and ALECMA became '*Association Lumière sur l'Emigration Clandestine au Maroc* [Shedding Light onto Clandestine Emigration in Morocco Association]' (Figs. 10 and 11).

Fig. 10 ALECMA by Guillaumar.

Behind the difficulties about the acronym, ALECMA was a creative, if at times confusing, attempt by migrants in Taqaddoum at exercising control over a situation in which they seemed powerless in the face of a hostile 'migration apparatus' (Feldman 2012). As noted by Van Houtum, 'the observation that the making of borders is the product of people's own social practices and habitus has led to the study of borders beyond a focus on states or nations' (2012: 406). Hence, as Coutin observes, 'borderlands […] have been seen as sites of resistance where a modus vivendi that redefines the social order can be devised' (2000: 28; see for example Gupta and Ferguson 1992). However, analyses have sometimes been too prompt in dismissing the nation-state which, as noted by Wilson and Donnan, 'sustained its historically dominant role as an arbiter of control, violence, order and organization for those whose identities were being transformed by world forces' (2012: 5). The anthropology of borders has been instrumental in exploring 'the permeability and permanence of borders by focusing on the adaptability and rigidity of border peoples and states in their efforts to control the social, political, economic and cultural fields which transcend their borders' (*ibid* 6). However, irregular migrants have often been incompletely included within analyses of such 'b/ordering' processes (van Houtum *et al* 2005). As noted by Nyers, 'non-status migrants are disqualified from sharing the stage with citizens as (political) actors. […] They are rarely perceived as agents, actors, participants, or subjects capable of making claims and demanding rights' (2010: 130). Hence, by focusing on the birth of ALECMA in Taqaddoum, this Chapter asks what kind of political organisation is possible for irregular migrants and what shape it can take in order to 'expose and decentre boundaries between the legal and the illegal, the legitimate and the illegitimate, and the overt and the clandestine' (Coutin 2000: 6). I focus particularly on uncertainty and ambiguity in irregular migrants' participation within current political contests over (im)mobility.

Firstly, Chapter 1 provides some contextual information about the neighbourhood of Taqaddoum and the increasingly visible population of sub-Saharan migrants before focusing more closely on political organisation amongst irregular migrants in this marginal neighbourhood. After discussing ALECMA's constitution and how its cluttered committee was a means to elicit the active involvement of more migrants, this chapter explores the ambiguous meanings attached to 'fighting

migration' in the light of migrants' ethical dilemmas over self-representation and draw parallels between ALECMA's uncertain aims (*objectifs*) and migrants' ambiguous 'objective'. Drawing on recent analyses within citizenship studies which have drawn on the 'autonomy of migration' paradigm and its focus on migrants' subjectivity, I argue that it is crucial to examine how migrants navigate the political realm rather than positing a restricted account of migrants' political protests. I discuss the apparent contradiction between migrants' continued crossing attempts and the voicing of regularisation claims to illustrate how analyses of migrants' political engagement need to pay attention to ambiguity and uncertainty. Finally, I examine how border crossing attempts themselves are described as 'looking for their rights' by migrants.

Fig. 11 An ALECMA meeting in *L'Embassade* in December 2012.

Getting to Taqaddoum


Taqaddoum,
Douar Hajja
and Maadid
Bouregreg
Avenue Hassan II
Route Ain Kholla
Pont Hassan II
N6
N1
Avenue Al Marsa
RABAT
Touarga
Avenue Mohammed V
R401
Avenue Ibn Khaldoun
Avenue Ibn Hazm
Avenue Mohammed Belarbi Alaoui
Avenue Haj Ahmed Balafrej
P4017
Rue Ghomara
Rue Ghzaoua
Avenue Patrice Lumumba
Avenue Ouarzazate
Avenue Moulay Ismail
Avenue Chellah
Avenue Al Alaouiyine
Rue Oued Zat
Rue Tenesft
Rue Oum Errabia
Avenue Annour
Avenue Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah
Avenue Al Qods
Avenue Des FAR
Rue Banu Ouarsen
Rue Mostafa
Rue Karkour
Rue Ragragui
Rue Malt
Rue Chlou
Rue Al Khol
Rue Zemmour
Rue Douukkala
Rue Ghafiqui
Rue Assafour
Rue Tamesna
Avenue Al Massira
Rue Ouled Zyane
Rue Tarfa
Rue Ibn Batouta
Rue Al Ikhlas
Avenue Tarfa
Avenue Ibn Sina
Avenue Malik
Rue Ibn Hamza
Rue Abdoul Dar
Rue Lalla Meriem
Rue Mamoun
Rue Al Fadila
Avenue El Wahda
Av Al Istiklal
Avenue Hassan II
Avenue Mohammed Ben Abdellah
Avenue Mohammed Al Yazidi
Avenue Al Aroui
Avenue Hassan II
Rue Ibn Rif
Rue Ibnou Taufil
Rue Ibn Rif
Rue Ibn Rif
Rue Ibn Rif

To reach Taqaddoum (Fig. 12), I would hop on a blue *petit taxi* near the train station Rabat-Ville to practise my *darija*. Puzzlement and words of advice against this 'dangerous' neighbourhood quickly became less common; soon enough, most drivers knew I wanted to be taken to Taqaddoum rather than to wealthier neighbourhoods in Agdal or Souissi. The taxi would drive past the eighteenth century Assouna Mosque, continue between the *quartier des Ministères* and the royal palace to emerge out of Bab Zaers onto the avenue Mohamed VI. Leaving the Almohade outer city wall and the medieval ruins of the Chellah behind, the road cuts across central and affluent neighbourhoods (Les Orangers, Agdal and Souissi) west of the avenue, and modest neighbourhoods (Youssoufia, Taqaddoum and Hay Nadha) on the east side, by the Bouregreg river. Rabat's spacious and wealthy neighbourhoods are further delimited by another layer of *quartiers populaires* along the Atlantic coast (Akkari, Douar Kora and Yacoub El Mansour). Troin (2002) notes the contrast between large, well-ventilated and often woody areas hosting wealthier neighbourhoods, which are shielded from the oceanic mist, and surrounding them, the much denser neighbourhoods with dilapidated houses, exposed to the humidity of the ocean and the *oued* (river).

Turning left through Youssoufia, the driver would drop me off at the taxi stand on Avenue Al Haouz, by a place known as *château*, pronounced with a long Arabic vowel *alif*. There, a water-tower (*château d'eau* in French) stands guard over the bustling street corner riddled with carts – selling street food, clothing and home-made *melloui* pastries. This is also the place where sub-Saharan migrants huddle together to wait for casual work (see Chapter 6).

Taqaddoum, meaning 'progress' in Arabic, is a heterogeneous neighbourhood, and the name is often used to encompass adjacent Douar Hajja and Maadid. It originates from the development of subsidized housing for families with lower revenues (i.e. *l'habitat du plus grand nombre*) which began during the French Protectorate with the appointment of Ecochard at the head of the Urbanism Service from 1946 to 1952. Northward, Taqaddoum is delimited (Fig. 13) by Avenue Al Haouz, on the other side of which lies Mabella, a more comfortable neighbourhood with individual villas. Eastward it ends with Avenue Mohamed Hassan Ouazzani

which continues south towards Hay Nadha and separates Taqaddoum from Souissi, a high status neighbourhood with spacious and guarded villas as well as embassies.

Fig. 13 Taqddoum, Douar Hajja and Maadid (Source: Streetmap).

Southward, Taqaddoum is separated from Maadid by Avenue Houmane al Fatouaki, a busy street starting at *château* and hosting a permanent market with concrete shops along one side, and many unauthorized shacks covering most of the road. Under plastic awnings tied to iron bars, fruit, vegetable, dates, fish and all sorts

of perishable goods are sold on top of wooden crates. Alongside these, before Eid al-Kabir, more periodic merchandises such as knives are sold.

Taqaddoum is composed of neatly aligned blocks of usually three or four storeys, separated by pedestrian alleyways leading to larger streets. Near the market street, adjacent to a large hammam, there is a small park where youths play football. In the morning, clusters of Moroccan men come out of Taqaddoum and the dark alleyways of Maadid and Douar Hajja, and sit at cafés with sunny terraces on Avenue al Haouz. Those who are unemployed make their black coffees or mint teas last for a few hours watching football or National Geographic Abu Dhabi.

Douar Hajja and Maadid

In contrast, Douar Hajja and Maadid are not the result of *ex nihilo* development programmes.[25] Neither are they shanty towns, although they were often referred to as *bidonvilles* by migrants and NGO workers. Rather, they are 'illegal districts [with] concrete buildings which more or less resemble traditional buildings, or cheap houses, but […] built on purchased plots of land without any permits' (Navez-Bouchanine 2003: 5). As stressed by Essahel (2011), within 'illegal habitats' inhabitants have bought plots of land and secured acts from the traditional notaries (*adouls*); however, the plots are located in areas prohibited for urbanisation or deemed non constructible (*terrain non constructible*).

[25] According to interviews conducted with researchers at Institut National d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme (INAU), the names Douar Hajja and Maadid may come from two families of landowners. Officially, the two neighbourhoods are named Hay El-Farah and Hay Errachad.

Fig. 14 Maadid from a Douar Hajja rooftop.

Douar Hajja and Maadid (Fig. 14) have been the recipients, along with the nearby shanty town Douar Doum, of the first Urban Development Plan (UDP) in 1976 (INAU 1984).[26] The UDP is the classic example of a new approach to urbanism in the 1970s which gave emphasis to restructuring *in situ*, combining 'spatial and physical upgrading on one hand, and social, economic or institutional improvements on the other hand' (Navez-Bouchanine 2003: 17). However, it was deemed 'a total fiasco' (Belfquih and Fadloullah 1986: 426). Analyses agree in judging negatively 'the spatial effects (architectural, urban, technical) […]: excessive density, lack of public spaces, minimal garbage dumps, "slummy" and even "ruralised" aesthetics and landscape, sometimes aggravated by tortuous or difficult sites' (Navez-Bouchanine 2003: 18). This worry over a permanent *'bidonvilisation'* (Navez-Bouchanine 2002: 169) was accompanied by concerns over security and difficulties in monitoring such spaces in the event of demonstrations.

[26] According to Navez-Bouchanine, 'douar' originally refers to a rural village but also designates 'either rural peripheries more or less integrated in the urban network, [or] peri-urban informal settlements' (2003: 26).

Fig. 15 Hay Nadha from rooftops in Maadid.

Separated by a narrow, low-level open area where youths play football, the two rolling douars of Hajja and Maadid, dense with buildings of unequal height and adorned with satellite dishes, are reminiscent of the two parts of the medieval medina in Fez. However, this complex maze of tortuous alleyways is a coarse concrete and bricks medina. Official attitudes towards such neighbourhoods have vacillated from indifference to destruction and *a posteriori* attempts at regularizing and updating them. 'As a result', Navez-Bouchanine claims, 'most of these neighbourhoods are a sort of intermediate product, between the *medinas* and the legal low-income housing estates' (2003: 17). There are no tourists or stunning medieval *medersas*. The most visible materials are red bricks, iron, cement and concrete. Sometimes one façade only is partially painted white which gives the neighbourhood a loud red and white bi-colour thread, wreathed by vivid garments and carpets hanging on the threadbare roof-terraces; roofs covered with metal sheets and superfluous layers of bricks suggest a potential additional floor to be built, sometimes overnight to avoid scrutiny from authorities (Fig. 15).

Fig. 16 At the back of Douar Hajja and Maadid.

Buildings hazardously lean against one another on an unstable terrain as they rise jaggedly, often blocking the sun in the humid alleyways. According to recent estimates, there are 100,000 inhabitants spread over 100 hectares, that is, 1000 inhabitants per hectare (Alain-El Mansouri 2004: 21).[27] Despite state interventions, Maadid and Douar Hajja have continued to grow. This great density and the general pattern of urbanisation, coupled with the natural risks inherent to those terrains, make for a structurally hazardous place. Overurbanization and surface runoff water forming gullies, coupled with the natural slopes and the geological configuration (marl and pebbles), increase the risk of collapse. Over-elevations of constructions with inadequate foundations add to the danger (Alain-El Mansouri 2004).

The instability of the terrain is most visible at the back of Douar Hajja, nicknamed the mountain (*djebel*), where the gradually rising hill ends in some places with an abrupt cliff. At the bottom, a road, littered with piles of discarded rubbish, runs along the back of Douar Hajja and Maadid (Fig. 16). Narrow streets prevent the efficient and regular collection of rubbish. Along the back road, some goats and cows,

[27] To put this in perspective, Edinburgh has got an average of 18 people per hectare and the highest in the UK is Kensington and Chelsea (140). Figures from: http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/interactive/2011/jun/30/uk-population-mapped (Accessed 05 March 2015).

reminiscent of the rural origins of many Moroccans in the neighbourhood, can be seen grazing. On the other side of the road lies another slope adorned with neat, white flats overlooking Taqaddoum from Hay Nadha, a modest neighbourhood widely seen as better off.

Fig. 17 An average-size *Couloir* in Douar Hajja.

The alleyways, often poorly lit and bearing painted numbers rather than street names are narrow, crooked and slippery. Sub-Saharan migrants call them *couloirs* (corridors, Fig. 17). 'Corridor' is a good fit, as the abrupt topography makes the coarse and slimy concrete alleys take sharp turns; it is a real hike in some parts. A semi-symmetrical grid, with some streets large enough to accommodate a multipurpose three-wheel Honda, is more prevalent in Douar Hajja, where the streets are slightly wider and the terrain plainer than in Maadid. As noted by Essahel, 'un-densification' was undertaken to allow for the restructuring works in the 1970s (2011: 144). It is easy for those unfamiliar with the topography to get lost in streets that branch off into smaller, curvy lanes where small carts, used to transport or sell goods, may cause congestion.

Fig. 18 a Douar Hajja terrace.

In Douar Hajja and Maadid, there are numerous grocery shops, brick shops, vegetable stalls, butchers etc., mostly in the main market streets, but few state facilities. Douar Hajja only has one dispensary. There are not many places of entertainment save for a couple of scruffy cafés, where hashish is often freely smoked indoors, the odd games room, or the numerous *cybers* (internet cafés) in both neighbourhoods. Most young people just hang out on the street.

A recent news headline called Douar Hajja 'a hideous scar' (Al Bayana 11-11-2008) in the capital city. This was directed more at the insufficient responses of the state to the problems of Douar Hajja and Maadid than at the inhabitants themselves. Although public understanding of illegal districts has shifted, fantasies persist, as in the following: 'such types of housing […] are associated with "urban abnormality" – they are inhabited by undisciplined, wild, filthy and uneducated people' (Navez-Bouchanine 2003: 9). Illegal neighbourhoods have been associated with the historical division in 'pre-modern' Morocco between *bled es–siba* (place of dissidence), as opposed to *bled el–makhzen* (place of submission) (Waterbury 1970). Taxi drivers from other neighbourhoods would advise me against going there.

I do not wish– in the words of Bourgeois – to '[oversensationalise] my experience of neighbourhood violence in a self-celebratory macho-manner' (2008:

357). Though I saw many knives and machetes, I experienced only one serious mugging attempt, and at a place where I should have expected it. When arguing, young men were verbally and physically threatening but friends and passers-by would usually calm them down before any blows would be exchanged. As described by Bourgeois (2008), acting loud is an effective means of gaining respect without having recourse to actual violence. Yet, I often saw actual puddles of blood and people with fresh wounds. Many young men in Douar Hajja bear scars on their faces and other visible parts of their upper body. Chapter 3 examines in more details the expectations and desires of Moroccan inhabitants in this marginal neighbourhood.

Fig. 19 my Cameroonian friend Eric William in Douar Hajja.

Sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum

Taxi drivers would drop me off by *château* saying 'this is the African neighbourhood'. Estimates for irregular migration are notoriously unreliable. Discussing the sub-Saharan population in Taqaddoum, Eric William, always prone to overstatements, exclaimed 'there are millions of us here in Taqaddoum, at least two million.' Alioua (2007) observed that for each room of nine to twelve migrants, only one person would go out to buy food, giving an estimate of 1000-1500 sub-Saharan migrants. A recent short-term study by Edogué Ntang and Peraldi (2011: 37) gives a figure of approximately 1500-2000, though they do not specify whether this is in summer, when

many migrants move to the borderlands. 2000 seems a probable figure but it is difficult to guess whether the population has increased. Living conditions have changed. During my fieldwork, migrants were more confident and moved more 'freely' than when Alioua undertook his doctoral fieldwork (Alioua 2011). Estimates based on the number of migrants spotted outside are unreliable. As further detailed in Chapter 2, many migrants were moving to less-crowded accommodation than previously, and sub-Saharan businesses (see Chapter 6) attracted migrants from other neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, Taqaddoum is a neighbourhood with a high (circular) mobility of migrants who get arrested and deported to Oujda, or, when border crossing attempts fail, periodically go to the borderlands before returning. During the summer and especially the period of Ramadan (which occurred in summer in 2011 and 2012), Taqaddoum becomes very 'quiet'. As news of successful group crossings in the north reaches migrants in Taqaddoum via internet and mobile phones, migrants often quickly rush there, hoping to cross too. Untypically for the winter after I arrived, Taqaddoum saw large numbers of sub-Saharans rushing to the Gourougou forest near Nador despite harsh weather conditions following a successful crossing into Melilla before Christmas 2012. Frequent police raids, 'migrant hunts' [*chasses aux migrants*] as many NGOs call them, alter the number of migrants too.

Most of my informants were Cameroonians and Ivoirians. Many came from Guinea-Conakry, and smaller numbers were from Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Nigeria etc. All were from central and western Africa. These observations mirror those made by Pierre-Marie, the then coordinator of the nearby NGO Caritas, located 300 meters from Taqaddoum's *château* in the district of Mabella, which provides social and health services to migrants. According to him, most migrants in Taqaddoum are from Cameroon Ivory Coast. Neither Caritas nor the UNHCR held databases of the spread of migrants over different neighbourhoods. Walking about with Eric William, I realized that Nigerians were numerous, and so were Malians, many of whom my Burkinabe friend Lamine said came straight from villages, spoke no French and stayed together, away from NGOs. Pierre-Marie's observation depended on the people who were attending the NGO, and some did not trust it.

The majority of the migrants I met were in their (early) twenties or thirties. According to quantitative research on irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco (AMERM 2008), the typical socio-economic profile is that of a single male with some level of education in his twenties. This pattern is gradually changing. Patrick, the central African president of the ALECMA association in Taqaddoum (see below), was in his forties. Also, the mother of Anastasia, a Cameroonian cook in Douar Hajja, had travelled alone before her daughter joined her in Morocco with her own child. She was in her late fifties and suffered from many health problems. Recently, more unaccompanied minors were registered by Caritas, whose educational programme tries to make up for difficult, if not impossible, access to schooling for asylum seeker and refugee children.

I met Yaya shortly before he returned home after signing up for voluntary return with IOM (International Organisation of Migration). From Douala, he shared a room with a few Cameroonians, two of whom he had travelled with and knew from home. He said he was twelve. Though he was probably still a minor, he did look older than twelve. As far as Pierre-Marie from Caritas was concerned, migrants' age, name and nationality were whatever they claimed. After Lamine eventually went back to Ouagadougou, Pierre-Marie would often joke that he was unsure as to what Lamine's real age and nationality were. I had seen his documents, which stated he was in his early twenties, but Lamine looked much younger. A short and skinny young man, he was friendly but also hyperactive and absent-minded. After losing his papers when getting stranded at the Mauritanian border (see Chapter 4) and reaching Saudi Arabia, he told me his new passport stated he was fourteen and he was playing in a cadet football team.

Escoffier notes the increase in the 'feminisation' (2004: 139) of migration. Women recently became a focus of concern as illustrated by an MSF (2010) report on sexual violence against migrant women and unaccompanied minors. During spring 2013, Picas and Eric William explained that more single women were travelling to Morocco, and that an increasing number of those already in Morocco were leaving the forests for the first time, often to seek medical assistance.

Pierre-Marie explained that because of transformations within Taqaddoum (e.g. relatively less violence towards migrants according to him), Caritas was more

inclined to rent rooms for women, unaccompanied children and families with young children in Taqaddoum. However, the majority of my respondents were still single men. Some, like Patrick, older and married, had left his children and wife back home. Many, like Stéphane, who presented himself as half Cameroonian and half Nigerien, had children from one or several relationships in their home country, but were single. The majority of my respondents, like Houdou from Cameroon, had no children or fiancés waiting for them at home. Relationships also formed *en route*. Marmiton, my main female respondent, a kind and resilient Bambeleke woman from Cameroon, became pregnant in the forest of Nador and gave birth to her daughter in early 2013; the father, however, had already crossed to Spain and they were no longer in contact.

As noted by Collyer,

> technological changes allow much poorer individuals previously restricted to sub-Saharan migration networks to take advantage of the opportunity to travel further using many of the same means. […] As elsewhere, international mobility still appears to be beyond the reach of the very poorest, but […] it is no longer the sole preserve of the wealthy (2010: 5).

A minority of my informants had acquired a degree at university or in a professional institute but most had some level of education; usually they had stopped at, or just before, the baccalaureate. Lamine had a baccalaureate from a French-Arabic high school in Burkina Faso; he also spoke several languages. My friend Perez, in his early twenties, was a very gentle Ivoirian man who always introduced himself as a roguish 'rebel'. He stopped schooling just short of his high-school qualification levels to pursue his dream of becoming a professional footballer, later shattered by an injury. Some pursued secondary studies. Houdou, who spent his free time in *L'Embassade* writing poetry, stopped studying shortly after his sciences baccalaureate in Cameroon; he could not afford to continue. Outspoken and sardonic, Eric William, also from Cameroon, had completed his baccalaureate. Though he was from a francophone family, he had an Anglophone baccalaureate. After one year at university, he decided that it was not for him and started working as intermediary for small businesses on the main commercial street of Yaounde. Picas was a well-spoken Cameroonian sporting a stylish beard. He studied sociology for two years but then pursued his interest in the music industry. He worked as a DJ in the Gulf region before coming to Morocco. His

childhood friend Cameroonian Sylvin was a journalist in Ivory Coast before joining Picas in Taqaddoum.

A small number of my informants had almost no schooling. Nottingham described himself as 'a street child' who had left his family house to do all sorts of things. He often repeated he was 'self-taught' and had picked up becoming a car-mechanic on the street. However, no schooling often meant limited fluency in French. Many Malians I met with Lamine were, in his words, 'straight from the countryside' where they worked the land.[28] They spoke no French. Pierre-Marie claimed to note a big drop in the level of education of migrants arriving in Morocco, often from poorer backgrounds, who registered with Caritas. Migrants in Taqaddoum, and in Morocco more generally, were no longer just single, young men in their twenties with some level of instruction, although most of my informants still were.

There is also variation in the previous employment of migrants. Some, like Ivoirian Mamadou, had their own businesses (often retail or crafts) when they left. Lamine's roommate Aron often boasted to me that his mother had a very successful business in the Ivory Coast and that he could go back at any time to work there and would be guaranteed to do well. Stéphane from Cameroon-Niger stopped a year before the baccalaureate and got a job fixing satellite TV cables until his boss' innovative business venture encouraged copycats, and Stéphane eventually lost his job for lack of business. Many others had been unemployed.

By the time I left the field in 2013, those who had not managed to cross to Europe (or decided to return) had been living in Morocco for around three years. In fact, many had arrived the same year as me, in 2011. I met others who had been in Taqaddoum for up to five or six years, like Yassine who was the 'chief of ghetto' (see Chapter 2) at *L'Embassade,* and I also encountered people who had been living irregularly in Morocco for much longer (one man from Cameroun had been there nine years). Chapter 4 returns to the topic of journeys towards Morocco and the issue of 'destination'.

Living in the margins, migrants in Taqaddoum were subjected to widespread discrimination, irrespective of their migration status. In Douar Hajja, I only met one student, though I was told there were more: a Nigerian who wanted to leave a

[28] In Moroccan Arabic, there is a similar proverb: 'from donkey to airplane.'

neighbourhood he deemed too dangerous. In the relatively established 'African boutique' on avenue El Farah, the Cameroonian owner was upset and refused to speak to me when I first contacted her. She confusedly said that people from the EU like myself kept coming to write about sub-Saharans in order to help Moroccans in their continued abuse of migrants. Her assistant, whom I was told held valid immigration documents, had just been taken in a raid a few days earlier and deported to Oujda. Hence, in their 2013 report, GADEM *et al.* note that 'many arrests, possibly the majority of them since the end of 2011, amount to ethnic profiling [*au faciès*] without distinguishing between the statuses of those arrested. This practice leads to the arrest of persons who may have a regular migration status [*position administrative regulière*]' (2013: 12).

I met only one UNHCR-recognized refugee in Taqaddoum, an Ivorian man who told me he had been recognized as a refugee in Mauritania but moved on for lack of adequate support; he had applied to the office in Rabat. Two of my informants were granted refugee status at the end of my fieldwork. Aziz from *Le Consulat* was quickly rehoused with help from the UNHCR to what he deemed a better neighbourhood in Douar Kora.

Some of my informants had overstayed their three-month visa (if they came from some of the sub-Saharan countries like Senegal from which nationals do not require a visa application to enter) after a journey via land (and for a few by air). The majority had entered irregularly via the closed Algerian border or the mined area known as Kandahar between Morocco and Mauritania. Many did not have passports; they were lost, stolen or confiscated on the way. Others had fraudulent passports, sometimes purchased from staff in sub-Saharan consulates. Yet, some had valid passports and visas and many in Taqaddoum had lodged asylum claims. However, this made little difference to how Moroccan authorities treated them. Upon registration, an asylum seeker was given a document to be renewed after three months; it was commonly referred to by migrants and some NGO workers as a '*demandeur*' [from *demandeur d'asile*, 'asylum-seeker' in French]. Although Morocco is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the rights of asylum seekers were barely enforced as NGOs and migrants regularly complained that police and military forces would tear asylum seekers' papers before deporting them. Even passports with a valid visa were

confiscated and destroyed. [29] Moroccan legislation (Law 02-03) was not enforced, and pregnant women and minors alike were not safe from arbitrary arrests and deportations. The UNHCR and other NGOs such as Caritas and GADEM spent a lot of time ensuring officially recognized vulnerable people (e.g. unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, asylum-seekers, refugees etc.) were released from detention and deportation orders. However, this depended on being identified in time by NGOs and on the willingness of Moroccan authorities to release them. The coordinator of one NGO in Rabat explained how upon entering a police station to obtain the release of an unaccompanied minor he was told 'never to set foot [there] ever again', and threats towards his organisation were barely concealed by the chief of police.

For Fargues, migrants 'tend to merge into one category in the local reality of SEM [Southern and Eastern Mediterranean] countries, where these migrants have no legal access to labour, welfare, or protection and, at best, merely subsist' (2009: 545). At the time of my fieldwork, it was still the UNHCR office in Rabat which granted refugee status. As Collyer has it, 'UNHCR cannot itself offer protection, and since it lacks the reach of the state there will inevitably be those who are unable to access this protection' (2010: 284). Furthermore, despite Moroccan legislation protecting refugees from deportation, NGOs noted that amongst the migrants deported in the desert by Moroccan forces in 2005, some had been recognized as refugees by the UNHCR or had lodged an application (Amnesty 2006). In their report, GADEM *et al* note that ethnic profiling of sub-Saharan migrants endured through 2012 and 2013, and saw the multiplication of police raids, officially aimed at 'tracking migrants' (2013: 13) and arresting sub-Saharans irrespective of their immigration or asylum status. As they point out,

> these waves of arrests nurture a climate of terror amongst irregular migrants and those waiting for a residency permit. This repressive politics, which particularly targets migrants of sub-Saharan origins, amounts to a major constraint on access to justice and fundamental public services such as education and health for irregular migrants in Morocco (2013: 15).

[29] One story in Taqaddoum was that once an African-American tourist was rounded up in town with sub-Saharan migrants and deported to the Algerian desert. He was released with an apology, Moroccan authorities explained he had mistakenly been picked up because he was black.

Furthermore, asylum-seekers received no systematic material help to cover living costs from UNHCR and were dependent on NGOs like Caritas, families and networks of fellow migrants to survive (see Chapter 7). Irrespective of whether they had lodged an asylum claim or not, all sub-Saharan migrants had similar protection needs from the infringements of their rights by Moroccan authorities, and lived in precarious conditions within the same derelict houses; categories ('irregular', 'asylum-seeker') were blurry. This was increased by migrants' strategies. Some explained they sought a '*demandeur'* simply for the potential protection it could offer in case of arrest and deportation to the desert. Stéphane applied for asylum for 'security reasons', he told me, and not because he seriously intended on getting asylum, at least not at the time.

In contrast to the plethora of legal and administrative statuses and labels (Zetter 2007), scholars have approached migration in terms of an 'asylum-migration nexus' (Castles and Van Hear 2005) and 'mixed migration' (Van Hear *et al.* 2009). Challenging dichotomies such as forced-voluntary, this paradigm posits 'a continuum at one end of which individuals and collectivities are proactive and at the other reactive' (Richmond 1994: 55, quoted in Van Hear *et al.* 2009: 7). Between people who migrate as a result of rational calculations to maximize interests and those who have no choice but to escape, there is a majority who have a limited degree of choice (such as timing of movement) despite responding to social, economic and political situations they have little control over (Richmond 1994: 61). For instance, this is particularly salient to secondary refugee movements. Whilst these refugees 'seek to secure their wider needs and work towards normality, beyond just looking for safety' (Zimmerman 2009: 93), their movements are often deemed voluntary and so bogus, thereby obscuring complex processes and motivations.

The widely acknowledged interactions between conflict and underdevelopment demonstrate 'how many migrants leaving sub-Saharan Africa will have a range of motivations, but that the distinction between the "economic" and the "political" is likely to be untenable due to the relationship between these underlying causes' (Betts 2006: 656). As Khosravi has it, 'is there any boundary between politics and the economy, especially in countries ruled by corrupt leaders? […] Human suffering is always a political issue' (2010: 113). In the US-Mexican border context, Bohem notes

that ‘individuals categorised as irregular or unauthorised labour migrants and those who require special protections and are perceived as asylum-seekers or refugees are not necessarily “different people” with “different needs” who move alongside one another’ (2011: 2).

Although I did not seek to assess potential refugee claims from my informants, some of the stories from migrants who never filed a refugee application could very well have amounted to a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ as defined by the 1951 Convention. For instance, Guillaumar explained how he left Cameroon because he started uncovering stories of corruption amongst local politicians, some of whom were related to his family. He was physically intimidated and his mother begged him to leave. He had not filed an asylum application and did not intend to do so at the time. Many did not trust UNHCR, and getting out of Taqaddoum to reach its office in the *Quartier des Ministères*, near the fortified American embassy, meant risking arrest.

Collyer notes that social, economic and political disturbances that form the background to a migratory movement can scarcely be attributed to a single cause. He recalls the narrative of an Ivorian respondent in Morocco who was not directly persecuted during unrest in his country but lost his business due to the volatility of the political context (2006: 132). Similarly, my informant Mamadou from the Ivory Coast, a man in his late thirties who saw his business venture destroyed during the last electoral crisis moved to a different part of the country. Later on, after setting up a smaller businesses somewhere else, he became dissatisfied with his living conditions and decided to take the road in search of other opportunities. Besides, Collyer observes that whilst classifications of migration are based on the circumstances of departure, increasingly long journeys mean that ‘migrants may be far removed in both time and space from their experiences of departure so that their reasons for leaving no longer have the relevance that they once did’ (2010: 279). For instance, Patrick left the Central African Republic to go and work in Libya. After several years, unrest there forced him to flee to Morocco without documents. In 2011, he found himself in Rabat undecided about where to go next. Eventually, the political crisis in his home country and events in his hometown made returning impossible. Migrants can also jump categories as a result of external circumstances as well as strategies of self-representation (Betts 2006: 656). Thus, Baldwin-Edwards notes that ‘“migration for survival” has emerged as a

composite – somehow straddling the western categories of forced and voluntary labour migrations, but crudely classed as illegal' (2006: 315).

My choice of the term 'irregular' migrant reflects the similarities in precarious, living conditions amongst my sub-Saharan informants in Taqaddoum. My informants in Taqaddoum were considered irregular migrants because they did not hold the required valid documents necessary to stay in Morocco after having crossed irregularly into Morocco or overstayed their visa. Many of my informants were also asylum-seekers, but this amounted to very little difference. As argued by De Genova with his coining of the term 'illegalization', and discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the 'illegality' of migrations needs to be denaturalized as it is produced and patterned rather than random and self-generating (2002: 424).

However, beyond the necessary analysis of how illegality is patterned and produced, it is also crucial to account for how irregular migrants organise themselves politically in response to these illegalizing processes. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus more closely on the birth of ALECMA – the association of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum introduced above. I focus particularly on the ambiguities of migrants' activism and what my informants meant by 'fighting clandestine migration'.

ALECMA's first meeting and its committee

I met Picas for the first time in early July 2012 with Pierre whilst dropping off posters for our theatre group's upcoming performance, a project of *Le Collectif* on '*interculturalité*' in partnership with an American student. Pierre then took me down Avenue El-Farah for one of my first tours around the edge of Douar Hajja and, after coming across him on the street, introduced me to Picas, calling him the 'President of migrants in Taqaddoum', a joke-title I took seriously for a while. A few days later, Picas invited us to *L'Embassade* where he expressed his wish to set up an association of migrants in Taqaddoum. When I mentioned existing ones like *Le Conseil*, Picas dismissed them as dormant and disconnected from 'migrants' realities.' Pierre, then president of *Le Collectif*, did not take offence and eagerly volunteered both our help.

Later, as I expressed some unease, Pierre argued that 'showing them the way' to create another migrants' organisation was a good deed in itself. He added, without

malice, that it would also facilitate my own research agenda and allow him to shoot more documentary videos. A meeting was set-up on the following Sunday afternoon in the Cameroonian 'ghetto' since most people would be free. Eventually, Sunday afternoon on the rooftop of *L'Embassade* became the default setting for meetings (Fig. 20).

Fig. 20 A meeting at *L'Embassade* after electricity was cut off (see Chapter 2).

On the Sunday after the start of Ramadan, we met for the first preliminary meeting. There were about twenty people on the roof-top and Pierre was showing pictures and videos he took near Nador. People made the usual comments and jokes about harsh life in the forests and violent 'attacks' – that is border-crossing attempts. I asked a young man who was standing next to us, taking long and hard looks at every picture, if he had been there. He shook his head. 'Not yet', he told me before gazing back at the pictures.

Eventually, Lamine, who had come along, Pierre, Picas, and I went to the second part of the terrace where mattresses and blankets had been tucked away to make space for the meeting. With another eight Cameroonian inhabitants of the 'ghetto', we sat with our backs against the red bricks, shielded from the sun by a blue plastic cover. Later on, we were joined by a few others I came to know better like Stéphane, Guillaumar and Patrick. Picas started the discussion: 'we are here to set up an

association to fight against illegal migration.' Incredulous, I stared at Pierre who remained impassive. Past my initial surprise, I turned my attention back to Picas who talked in very broad terms about the goals he envisaged for the association: the 'reinsertion' of migrants after their return, the 'decrease of clandestine migrants', the gathering of testimonies about migrants' plights in Morocco to increase awareness amongst would-be-migrants in home countries. He ended by stressing that they needed to set up an executive committee soon and create communication tools such as an email address and a Facebook account. He turned to Pierre and me: 'we will manage all this ourselves, but our brother Pierre and our brother Sébastien will guide us.' I was not yet used to his charismatic though preachy oratorical skills.

After the meeting, Pierre told me that as a white face there I would help ensure that people get active since the whole enterprise looked more credible with my presence. We left after deciding to meet at a later date with further ideas about the organisation and also after having discussed the association with migrants from other nationalities in Taqaddoum's 'ghettoes'. ALECMA's name was decided at a later meeting. Rather than devising a clear set of goals for the association from the onset, ALECMA members were first concerned with allocating roles and positions to members. Shortly after the initial meeting, Picas and Pierre piloted the setting up of a committee composed of a cumbersome list of titles and positions. It was a very swift process: migrants volunteered themselves and were appointed, allegedly by consensus but mostly by Picas and Pierre. Among the many secretaries, there was one for cultural and sport affairs, one for project development (Guillaumar), one for women and children's affairs (Marmiton). There were spokespersons (including Eric William) as well as internal information officers. Stéphane became the *censeur* (i.e. overseeing the formal procedure of meetings). There were several vice-presidents as well as general secretaries (including Perez) and their vice-secretaries. Most of the positions were doubled-up with an 'assistant' position. The list was so long that everybody came out with a title but hardly anyone remembered exactly who was in charge of what just after the meeting. I politely refused to become the vice-president though Picas and others insisted a white man as vice-president could turn helpful. I accepted, like Pierre, the title of advisor.

Fig. 21 ALECMA logo.

Bureaucratic proceedings in migrants' organisations often drew sarcastic comments from some NGO members, especially Europeans, about extravagantly ceremonial African politics imbued with overblown conventions. Soon there were issues in ALECMA as people could not agree whether the tandem-positions implied a hierarchical positioning and the remit of each function was contested. However, such arrangements also mirrored migrants' anticipation of what they expected NGOs would require for engaging with migrants. As irregular migrants their association had no legal basis, but ALECMA members were constantly preoccupied with formalities to be taken seriously. The drafting of an internal set of rules for ALECMA was one of the main topics of conversation during early meetings, though it was never completed. Although clear aims were never articulated in a succinct and concise manner, migrants spent the most part of meetings deciding on a logo (Fig. 21) and an email address and who should have the password. From early on, members spent a lot of time speculating on how to secure their own office space, especially after the fall of *L'Embassade* and the relocation of meetings to Marmiton's windowless restaurant. Members wanted things to be in good order but they struggled to find pens for their meetings.

Providing everyone with a title fuelled confusion but was also a means to make migrants feel valued and be more active. Pierre and Picas were particularly keen for ALECMA to bridge over divisions amongst sub-Saharan migrants. For Picas, setting up ALECMA in *L'Embassade* was simply an extension of some of the supportive work carried out in this long-established 'ghetto' where migrants often sought help. However, he was set on establishing ALECMA as something other than just another nationality-focused association of migrants. Concurrently to the founding of

ALECMA, Cameroonian businessmen were competing for the position of president in the Cameroonian diaspora association (in close contact with the official embassy). Picas and others in Douar Hajja were outraged by what they perceived as dishonest petty politics and wanted to move beyond this with ALECMA.

After the first preparatory meeting, Picas and others met up with migrants in Douar Hajja, especially chiefs of 'ghettoes' and other influential figures. Picas' interlocutors often started by enquiring whether there was NGO support, mainly financial, whilst curiously looking at me if I was around. After receiving a negative or convoluted answer, they often said they might join when things had picked up. Some, like my informants in *Le Consulat*, were adamant ALECMA was just some 'Cameroonian thing', pointing that meetings were held in the mostly Cameroonian 'ghetto' *L'Embassade*. Yet, the 'ghetto' had been chosen for convenience because of its size and since most early members lived there.

Partially to avoid additional complications with ALECMA being further taken for a Cameroonian-centred association, Picas did not become president. He took the title of founding-president. Patrick, from the Central African Republic, was appointed president of ALECMA, both because he was the oldest among those involved and because his appointment prevented tensions amongst more outspoken members. Though he was respected because of his age and renowned moral rectitude, he had little charisma and almost no experience.

Although they struggled, Picas and others did manage to bring into ALECMA people of different nationalities, like Ivorian Perez from *Le Consulat*, as well as Guineans from the building opposite. Nevertheless, ALECMA did not bring in as many people as they hoped for. Yet, there were often over ten or fifteen people during regular Sunday meetings. ALECMA could also mobilize a few more people for events. However, membership was still mostly centred on Cameroonians from *L'Embassade* and other Francophone migrants in its surroundings. Though some Anglophone migrants sporadically attended ALECMA meetings, with me and Eric William translating for them, ALECMA was mostly francophone. As such, and in many other respects, it was not fully representative of all sub-Saharan migrants living in Taqaddoum. For instance, Marmiton was among the few women in ALECMA, and there were no families.

The issue of representativeness was crucial for ALECMA members who often accused other migrant associations of being disconnected from migrants' 'realities' and thought they needed to represent all migrants to be credible interlocutors with NGOs. Camille, coordinator at GADEM, repeated to them that NGOs were not looking for spokespersons on behalf of all migrants, but were keen on interacting with active, self-organised migrants who had something to say for themselves. ALECMA's self-assertions about representativeness were shared by many other migrant activists and were apparent in trivial political struggles amongst migrant associations.

ALECMA emerged amongst other already-established migrants' associations such as *Le Conseil* and *Le Collectif*, as well as the concurrently-developing trade union *ODT-Migrants*. Despite their inexperience and loud clumsiness, the bluntness of ALECMA adherents came to be valued by many NGO members. Some migrants developed personal relationships with NGO members, especially Eric William with people from GADEM. ALECMA gradually came to be valued for its work and own input within debates about migration. For instance, as a member of GADEM put it to me, '[ALECMA] are a reminder that not all migrants want to stay here.' Indeed, in the period prior to the emergence of ALECMA, the focus had largely switched to the integration of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco with many projects centred on *interculturalité*. At the December 2011 conference organised by *Le Collectif* to commemorate the six years since the 2005 Ceuta and Melilla events (entitled '*Que Justice soit Faite* [that justice be done]'), a great emphasis was put on the 'regularisation of 'all *sans-papiers*'. Members from *Le Collectif* and *Le Conseil* had been established in Morocco for many years and ALECMA, with its members more recently arrived in Morocco, brought a new dynamism to advocacy for migrants by providing a regained insight into the lives of sub-Saharan migrants living in very precarious conditions and with ambiguous migratory projects (i.e. not necessarily focused on remaining in Morocco). Yet, the issue of representativeness never fully disappeared. Some members claimed that it represented more than just sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum and that the last two letters of the acronym should stand for '*Maghreb*' instead of '*Maroc*'.

At the time of the creation of ALECMA in the summer of 2012, migrants in Morocco had already collectively organised themselves and articulated political

claims. Valluy (2007b) notes that whilst until autumn 2005 the political and social existence of sub-Saharan migrants was mainly focused on subsistence and crossing, this took a radical turn after the tragic Ceuta and Melilla events. Besides the period of intensive repression in 2005, Alioua's discussion of what he calls the 'shift to the political [*passage au politique*]' mentions a workshop (*Asil'maroc*) held by two organisations: the French CIMADE and Moroccan AFVIC. The meeting, which brought together researchers, activists and migrants, focused on a critique of anti-migrant European politics and its externalisation to neighbouring countries (Alioua 2009: 293). He also notes the organisation of the Euro-African NGO conference entitled '*Migrations, droits fondamentaux et liberté de circulation* [Migrations, fundamental rights and free movement]'. As a result of this conference, several migrants' associations were constituted in Morocco and other countries with a focus on right of asylum and freedom of movement and close links to human rights activists across the Mediterranean.

By 2012, there were several migrants' organisations in Morocco, although they were not recognised by the authorities, with growing links to trans-Mediterranean networks of NGOs, activists and academics.[30] The emergence of ALECMA also occurred at a peculiar time of increased violence against migrants which NGO workers and activists often compared to the 2005 events. ALECMA members, who had mostly been in Morocco for around a year or two, had arrived during what other migrants and NGO members described to me as a period of relative reprieve. But from the second half of 2011, police brutality and exactions against migrants increased exponentially. As further described below, their diplomatic representatives' failure to protect them from attacks in Taqaddoum and from Moroccan and Spanish forces' increased brutality in the borderlands led migrants in Taqaddoum to get organised. However, ALECMA was not set up because of renewed repression and brutality at the border with Spain and within Morocco; one of the impetuses behind its constitution is better explained in the light of adventurers' ethical dilemma over self-representation.

[30] This was also the case for Moroccan NGOs such as GADEM which had still not been recognised by the Moroccan government at the time.

‘Exposing the true realities of migrants’

Although puzzling at first, the impetus behind ALECMA’s creation and recurrent discourses of ‘fighting migration’, sometimes re-articulated as ‘reducing the percentage [of irregular migration]’, is better understood in the light of some of the ethical dilemmas faced by migrants (further explored in Chapter 7). During the first meeting, Picas and Pierre were appealing to a feeling of guilt amongst many migrants whose self-portrayal (e.g. pictures in wealthy neighbourhoods) may be instrumental in impelling their relatives ‘to take the road’.

After Picas argued for the need to fight irregular migration at the first meeting, Pierre stood up to talk about how people in home countries do not believe migrants when they say they are suffering or need help because they see pictures on social media of migrants looking smart on the streets of Rabat’s wealthier neighbourhoods. ‘It is important to make brothers at home aware that in Morocco we live like this, it happens like this’ Pierre said pointing to the ‘ghetto’ around us. He stressed that people thinking of going on the ‘adventure should not expect to come here and work in an office with air-conditioning and a computer’, adding that ‘for every person that will make it to Europe, ten others will die.’[31] When my turn came to speak, I gave a few words of encouragement and then shared some of my apprehensions about how some of what Picas had spelled out might play into the hands of a migration apparatus across the Mediterranean aimed at curbing their opportunities to move. Picas clarified what he meant: ‘we do not want to stop all emigration. Emigration has been going on for decades. What we want to do is to denounce the obstacles like violence and rape. We want to highlight the risks to avoid our brothers becoming *clandestins*, [to stress] that they can emigrate legally [instead].’

Pierre’s speech led Guillaumar to recall a story, which he often repeated again during early meetings to new members to stress the importance of ALECMA. He explained that his younger brother in Cameroon was convinced Guillaumar was doing extremely well in Morocco and thought that Guillaumar’s words of advice about not undertaking the journey were not in good faith. Although Guillaumar was not clear why this was the case, he hinted that it had something to do with deceiving, or at least

[31] Chapter 4 examines in more details what my informants meant by ‘adventure’ when describing their migratory journeys.

partial, information, including pictures shared on social media. Fearing for his brother's life and his family, Guillaumar solemnly explained that he divulged the 'true realities' he was living in, adding with much gravitas that he shared what he described as sobering pictures of himself on construction sites depicting hardship conditions. His brother decided to remain in Cameroon where shortly after he bought a piece of land, found a job and married. Each time the story was recalled, Guillaumar's brother grew more successful as a result of not migrating clandestinely thanks to Guillaumar's exposure of arduous living conditions in Morocco despite the shame it implied for him.

This emphasis on transparency and exposure was familiar to Guillaumar who recalled to me how he fled Cameroon due to what he described as his relentless exposure of corruption amongst local politicians. Guillaumar was forced to leave because he was recording the opulence of some politicians and contrasting it with the poverty of the region they represented. Within ALECMA, he was keen to continue such work and frequently made parallels between his past activities in Cameroon and the need to expose migrants' true conditions. Several weeks after the first meeting, Guillaumar drafted a leaflet for ALECMA, entitled 'The West – the end of misery'. After a cover showing a mass of black silhouettes on a seemingly endless road, the text rhetorically asks whether clandestine migration can be stopped. 'No', the document states, because 'there will always be people constrained to clandestine migration for survival reasons.' Highlighting the numbers of deaths during journeys and the precarious lives of migrants, the document invites the reader to ponder on their 'choice' of clandestine migration – those who have left already, but especially those still in sub-Saharan countries considering 'taking the road', leaving on 'the adventure' without the necessary immigration documents. It draws a causal relationship between migrants' deaths and lack of information, lack of (immigration) documents, lack of work and lack of money. The principal cause of deaths is then the 'dream of a better life; the west as "the Eldorado on earth."'

The document then asks the reader whether clandestine migration can be reduced. This time, the answer is 'yes': through information sharing, videos, testimonies, showing the precariousness migrants live in. The booklet concludes with a rhetorical question: isn't Guillaumar's story (about himself and his brother) proof that with more information about 'the real lives of *clandestins*, clandestine migration

can decrease and shift from clandestine migration to *immigration choisie* [chosen migration]?' In this ambiguous sentence, choice refers to migrants making informed decisions (i.e. choosing whether to migrate legally or not). This kind of discourse was often heard amongst ALECMA members who simultaneously acknowledged that migrants suffered because they had no visa and asserted that people should not migrate irregularly. Somehow lost in this early narrative were the responsibilities of government bodies drafting legislation, enforcing policies and issuing visas, as well as, crucially, the migrants' own stories. Many told me they had attempted to obtain a visa before 'taking the road' and that this had proved too difficult or onerous (often because of corrupt officials).

The term '*immigration choisie*', popularised by Sarkozy when French Interior Minister, refers to a politics of migration whereby quotas and criteria are set by the governing body to select migrants with specific skills. It is set in contrast with '*migration subie* [inflicted migration]' which refers to other migrants such as asylum seekers who are deemed an undesirable burden (Lochak 2006). As Squire has it, 'on the one hand, the "legitimate" movement of people across borders has been approached as a productive force to be harnessed or managed while, on the other hand, the "illegitimate" movement of people across borders has been approached as a destructive force to be controlled or restricted' (2011: 2). ALECMA's booklet uses '*immigration choisie*' in the same context but imbues it with a completely different meaning which highlights 'choices' by migrants.

'Fighting irregular migration' was essential for migrants who wanted others to make an informed decision about whether or not to undertake a dangerous and uncertain journey. From early on, migrants discussed with enthusiasm the prospect of documenting journeys and harsh living conditions for families and friends at home through video projects. The script by Nottingham transcribed in the introduction to this thesis was to be developed into a film. Yet, such expression often elicited, at least initially, puzzled and even hostile reactions from NGO workers as well as other migrants. One NGO worker jokingly told them they would be guaranteed to find funding from the European Union, especially with the early name they had chosen for themselves. Progressively, as ALECMA members articulated more clearly what they meant, the need to inform potential migrants came to be recognised by others;

although, as pointed out by my friend Stéphane from GADEM, for NGOs such work could only be done by migrants. Indeed, this exposure of journeys' conditions is reminiscent of some of the techniques employed by governments in countries of origin to deter potential migrants in anti-migration and anti-trafficking campaigns (Sharma 2003).

Hence, 'fighting irregular migration' demonstrates how discourses and practices are entangled in complex 'workings of power' (Abu-Lughold 1990: 42) whose analysis requires more than a romanticized account of resistance. As Squire has it, 'to focus on irregularity as an ambivalent condition thus requires the development of an analytical approach that can explore how productive powers of (ab)normalization continuously encounter resistances, contestations, appropriations and re-appropriations of irregularity' (2011: 10). I concur with Squire's focus on the complex interactions between such 'productive powers' and irregular migrants as well as other agents. Yet, in order to look beyond the 'hopeful confirmation of the failure – or partial failure – of systems of oppression' (Abu-Lughod 1990: 53), I would argue that it is necessary to give more space to the analysis of complex and ambiguous 'objectives' in migrants' protests. As Ortner has it, creative and transformative potentials are better grasped 'if one appreciates the multiplicity of projects in which social beings are always engaged, and the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on as well as collide with one another' (1995: 191).

The multiple meanings ALECMA members attributed to 'shedding light onto clandestine migration' are illustrated by the 'N9 campaign'. On 16th March 2013, Sylvin, an ALECMA member with a background in journalism, went to the Gourougou forest near Nador with Sarah, an Italian intern at FMAS (*Forum des Alternatives Maroc*). There, they met up with migrants who had been wounded during an 'attack' on 11th March which was violently repressed by Moroccan and Spanish forces. The 'mission' was an initiative of ALECMA. Picas and Sylvin solicited help from GADEM which provided some support. They also contacted Sarah whom they had met at another event because she had a camera and experience in video editing.

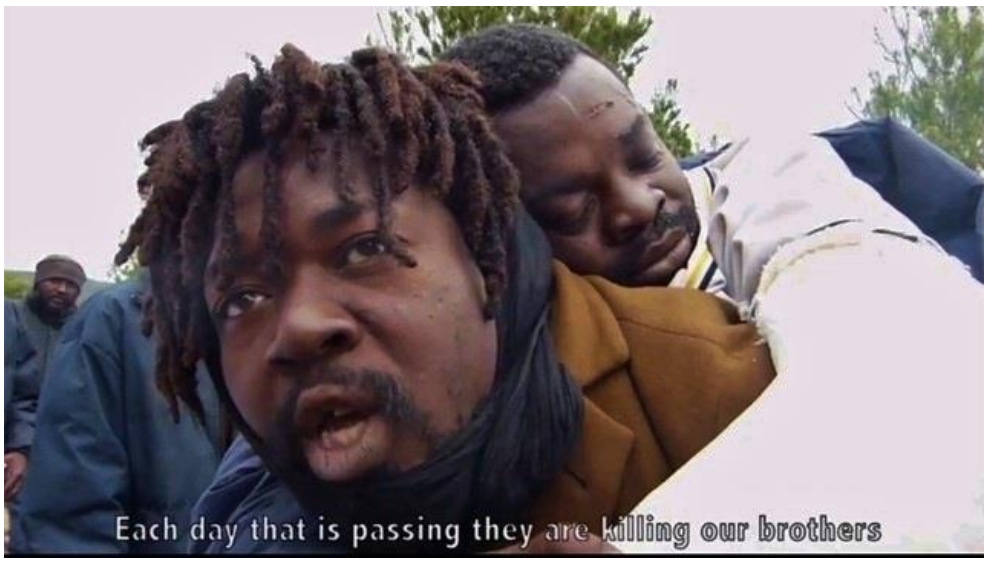

Fig. 22 Caption from 'N9' video.

The trip resulted in a powerful video, called 'Number 9' (Fig. 22), depicting the last moments before Clément died. Clément, a Cameroonian migrant, participated in the group attempt to cross the border between the Moroccan city Nador and the Spanish city Melilla on 11th March. Along with 120-200 other sub-Saharan migrants, he left the improvised camp in the Gourougou forest near the border at 2am. The migrants waited until the first prayer call to climb on makeshift ladders over the razor-topped fences. Those who managed to cross were shot with blanks by the *Guardia Civil*, handcuffed and beaten before being loaded in Toyota trucks and handed over to the Moroccan authorities along with what some migrants obliquely described as 'small envelopes.'

Clément suffered a broken arm and leg as well as a head wound. He was admitted to the hospital along with another twenty-four migrants, three of whom were in comas. Hospital workers refused him a scan since they deemed his wounds 'not serious [enough]' and he was discharged on the same day. Having received no sound medical care, he made his way back to the forest where his companions saw his condition deteriorate. On 16th March, as Sylvin and Sarah were filming and interviewing migrants about the attack, Clément's health got worse. An ambulance was called but he died from his injuries before it could arrive. The name of the video bears the number on Clément's T-Shirt. As further explained in Chapter 4, migrants

often described themselves as the strikers scoring goals for their families. Clément's death left a widow and two children in Cameroon.

The video also became the centrepiece of a campaign led by ALECMA, GADEM and AMDH with other partners to denounce the violence against migrants which received international coverage (Bachelet 2013). [32] The campaign contextualised the death of Clément to highlight numerous other lethal cases and deplore Spanish and Moroccan brutality and infringement of migrants' rights. Eric William, who was at the time spending much time within GADEM's office, was adamant the video needed to be used in order to 'denounce' hostile politics of migration, brutality against migrants in general and against migrants' leaders in particular. Other members of ALECMA, especially Picas and some who were planning on returning to Cameroon, insisted the original focus on raising awareness amongst would-be-migrants in Cameroon and beyond should be upheld. They were also worried about 'exposing ALECMA too much' and the family of Clément thinking ALECMA had made money from the video. They decided both aspects should be pursued. Eventually, an ALECMA member who had returned home was interviewed by a Cameroonian media outlet about the video with Sarah who had joined him there. However, other ALECMA members were not involved in this venture and it is mostly the emphasis on 'denouncing' the infringements of migrants' rights which predominated in this campaign. The campaign illustrates how ALECMA members were pursuing multiple projects with their focus on exposing the 'true realities' of migrants' lives and journeys.

The 'three dimensions of ALECMA'

My informants' migratory and life 'objectives' were ambiguously articulated as migrants adapted their migratory projects and responded to arising opportunities and changing circumstances (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of transit, destination and navigation in 'adventure' for irregular, sub-Saharan migrants). 'Reaching for the objective' (*atteindre l'objectif*) was often loosely defined as 'looking for one's life' (*chercher sa vie*) or 'looking for one'self' (*se chercher*). Rather than talking of a fixed destination, my informants would often simultaneously express the

[32] Mediapart 28-06-2013; Reppublica 28-06-2013; Yabiladi 28-06-2013; El País 28-06-2013.

wish to return, stay or continue their journey. Reaching the 'objective' entailed an epic quest ('the adventure') marked by precariousness and violence but also hope in the face of uncertainty. Yet, such uncertainty over the success of crossing attempts was productive as migrants needed to remain active in order to find what they called '*chance*' (or 'luck'. See chapter 5). In parallel, ALECMA displayed a wide range of ambiguously defined goals and aims (also often referred to as '*objectifs*').

In early 2013, I helped ALECMA members to create a leaflet addressed to potential funders and supportive NGOs, a frustrating process as members could not agree on clear and specific 'objectives' aside from an emphasis on 'shedding light' and 'fighting [for and sometimes against] migration'. The blurb about ALECMA describes it as an association 'by and for migrants' and lists some of the association's past activities for the year 2012. It enumerates several convoluted objectives: shedding light on clandestine migratory exodus; informing migrants about NGO services available to them as well as their rights, and informing NGOs about migrants' needs to find a solution together; supporting peaceful coexistence amongst sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans as well as eradicating the moral hatred targeted at the Moroccan diaspora which permeates sub-Saharans returning to their home countries; making sub-Saharan governments aware of the consequences of their bad politics and criticising Maghreb governments about the treatment of migrants and the non-respect of their rights. The reference to 'rights' was mostly my input, although, as described further below, such a vocabulary was becoming more prominent amongst some members of ALECMA.

Members had little, if any, experience in advocacy and political organisation. When asked, Picas would point to his experience setting up his own small record label. ALECMA members often confessed to me that, before getting involved, they did not know what an NGO was. Hence, migrants often struggled to produce the standard documents (e.g. reports, funding applications) NGOs required from them when engaging in collaborative ventures. Besides workshops on asylum and migration, migrants often demanded to be offered concrete and practical training in advocacy, funding and other organisational matters by NGOs in Rabat. This was a recurrent demand which remained unfulfilled (at least up to the time I left) partially due to a lack of time and resources, as well as a wariness from some NGOs like GADEM about

interfering within migrants' organisations. Nevertheless, on an informal and personal level, there were of course exchanges between NGO workers and migrant leaders. For instance, Eric William, Stéphane from GADEM (also my flatmate) and I struck up a friendship and often helped out with ALECMA issues, especially in advising Eric William on articulating his ideas and developing his projects.

In contrast with the false impression provided by the production of a leaflet, the aims of ALECMA remained very much elusive, including to members themselves, who often argued or were unclear over what ALECMA was really about. Yet, they all agreed that the association was 'doing a lot of work'. Such ambiguity and uncertainty in articulating ALECMA's objectives allowed members to remain reactive and engage in a variety of activities as long as they remained within ALECMA's vague remit, although, ultimately, such vagueness was the subject of discord amongst members as in the case of the 'N9' campaign described above.

Members engaged with a variety of NGOs (e.g. Caritas, GADEM, AMDH, etc.) as they reacted to arising opportunities and contacts they established. In the few written documents produced by ALECMA, as well as during conversations and meetings, migrants usually described their association as a 'bridge' between migrants and NGOs. Whilst initially exploring Taqaddoum and its 'ghettoes' in 2012, I was struck by how much migrants would complain about charitable NGOs, stressing they were not receiving the necessary care they felt entitled to. In contrast, the brutality exerted by Spanish and Moroccan authorities, especially in the borderlands, was sometimes recalled in a matter-of-fact way. ALECMA's emphasis on transparency and exposure of the 'true realities' of migrants' living conditions was then strongly associated with 'denouncing' perceived injustices from NGOs, especially Caritas, located just outside Taqaddoum, which migrants accused of privileging certain nationalities and sometimes referred to as 'an NGO for the Congolese only.' Migrants also talked about how NGO members were making a living off migrants in Morocco and their suffering, 'eating the money' NGOs received from donors such as the European Union. It is not so surprising that migrants sought to obtain more control over their dealings with charitable NGOs such as Caritas since decisions about whether and how much support migrants would receive were affecting their lives greatly;

furthermore, their grievances could be more easily be articulated to NGOs than to the Moroccan authorities.

Through the unofficial mediation of Marjorie, who was a friend of Pierre and worked at the French embassy, ALECMA quickly developed a working relationship with Caritas, the NGO affiliated with the Catholic Church, and especially Pierre-Marie, its then coordinator. Caritas provided various types of support to migrants, especially women and unaccompanied minors: a food bank, financial help with rent, training opportunities, alternative schooling for minors, etc. Regular meetings were held alternately at Caritas and *L'Embassade*.

As a 'bridge', ALECMA was passing on information to other sub-Saharan migrants about how Caritas functioned and the kind of help they could expect. Furthermore, ALECMA often shared with Pierre-Marie information about issues and events affecting migrants in the borderlands through their own contacts. This was crucial for humanitarian NGOs in anticipating needs. Such exchange of information between migrants' associations and other NGOs was formally and regularly occurring in a dedicated *plateforme* meeting to discuss problems and strategies together. Although the workings of this *plateforme* are beyond the scope of this chapter, I want to highlight that it was also during some of those meetings that ALECMA members acquired a new vocabulary by learning more about issues such as rights and international treaties.

Besides the passing-on of information from Caritas, ALECMA members endeavoured to devise their own projects to tackle migrants' issues and solicited small financial help from NGOs such as Caritas. The most successful project was the setting-up of emergency accommodation to help migrants needing temporary shelter. Caritas agreed to partially fund the rent and bills of the narrow window-less ground floor accommodation where Marmiton lived and had set up her restaurant for her to accommodate vulnerable migrants sent by Caritas, as well as people selected by ALECMA itself. It was also the same small place where ALECMA meetings were moved to when *L'Embassade* was finally shut down by the police and the landlord. Besides the relationship and activities ALECMA developed with Caritas, members were always considering new projects with various organisations. Although many

were abandoned before starting, the projects pertained to a wide range of issues faced by sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco (e.g. health, education, voluntary return, etc.).

The parallel between ALECMA's blurry goals (*objectifs*) and its members' ambiguous 'objective' is further illustrated by the pervasive reference to ALECMA's 'three dimensions [*trois volets*]'. Besides 'fighting against migration', ALECMA members often asserted they were 'fighting for all migrants' and that the association was aimed at those who wished to return to their home country as well as those willing to remain in Morocco or continue the journey to Europe (or elsewhere).

At the preliminary ALECMA meeting mentioned above, Pierre and Picas stressed that if people in Nador were set to cross to Europe, the migrants in Taqaddoum were 'looking for a solution' and had given up on crossing. I looked at the man who earlier on had told me he had 'not yet' gone to the forests. He, like the others, remained silent, listening. During early meetings, there were many references to returning to home countries for setting up projects there. Such emphasis reflected Picas and Pierre's own migratory concerns at the time. In fact, members of ALECMA had complex and ambiguous migratory projects like other irregular, sub-Saharan migrants (aka 'adventurers') in Taqaddoum (see Chapter 4). Despite an initial emphasis on returning home in the first meetings, members of ALECMA quickly started talking about the three dimensions of the association, reflecting three main possible directions for migrants: returning, staying or continuing.

Further paralleling migration's objective and its emphasis on learning and preparing one's life, ALECMA, with its 'three dimensions', was meant to help 'prepare' migrants wherever they wanted to go next. For instance, in the first meeting, Picas and Pierre discussed at length how migration (also described as 'adventure' – see Chapter 4) is 'an advantage' because 'one learns a lot during the journey.' Pierre pointed at Nottingham and his *beignets* saying that even here in Morocco you can learn things and go back. During early meetings, Picas and Pierre often talked about the importance of acquiring new skills (e.g. through training and workshops) which would be vital for migrants returning home, but also for those staying in Morocco or continuing to Europe. Although some interesting ideas were developed and this aspect was most highlighted when trying to recruit members, nothing substantial was realised in this area.

In parallel with migrants' ambiguous objectives, ALECMA's objectives as an association were equally uncertain. This allowed members to engage with NGOs and projects, as well as articulating their own ideas, as long as they remained within ALECMA's ambiguous remit. Nevertheless, this emphasis on the 'three dimensions' and members' attempts at getting involved with a wide array of projects meant they often spread themselves thinly. There were also numerous tensions within ALECMA over 'advantages' (e.g. money for transport and lunch) members would get when collaborating with NGOs. In Taqaddoum, ALECMA members were also sometimes accused of 'eating money' and living off the suffering of migrants. As Stéphane from GADEM put it, ALECMA's social work was 'gnawing at them'. Eric William would accompany sub-Saharan migrants to their medical appointments before going to his. As Eric William put it when another migrant from Taqaddoum insisted on getting his help despite Eric William being ill: 'me too, I have the same problems as you'.

Analyses of social movements and their focus on 'contentious politics' (Tilly and Tarrow 2006) provide useful tools to discuss the uncertain 'three dimensions' of ALECMA. According to Tilly, in the course of social movements, 'change occurs incrementally as a consequence of constant innovation, negotiation and conflict' (2004: 14). This is relevant for interactions outside of as well as within movements. For instance, in her seminal work on migration and the US sanctuary movement, Coutin illustrates how '[a] movement's stated goals are not always as coherent or undisputed as researchers assume' (1993: 170). Within ALECMA, how to go about 'exposing the true realities' and 'the three dimensions' were the subjects of regular debates.

In his discussion of the lack of 'a theoretically-informed anthropology of social movements' (2001: 241), Gibb draws on Escobar (1992) and Spencer (1997) to argue that within anthropology 'definitions of the political sphere remained problematic, and served indirectly to perpetuate the marginalisation of social movements research within the discipline' (*ibid*). In the remainder of this chapter, I argue that, although recent analyses of migration have challenged what it means to be political, they need to account for multifaceted and uncertain aims within migrations' protest movements.

‘Getting our rights’

Shortly after the first ALECMA meeting, towards the end of Ramadan, a series of violent assaults by Moroccans towards sub-Saharan migrants, some of whom suffered serious stab wounds, led to a peaceful but angry march of around a hundred migrants from Taqaddoum towards the adjacent neighbourhood of Souissi. On the pictures Pierre took, one man is holding a pair of trousers, soaked with blood, hanging from a stick. Some Moroccan passers-by showed support whilst others were hostile, further highlighting the ambiguous relations between migrants and Moroccans (see Chapter 3). The police, after enquiring where they were heading, let them pass. They were marching to the Malian and Cameroonian embassies and requested to meet with the consuls. The latest casualties from assaults in Taqaddoum were mostly Malian and Cameroonian.

As a Cameroonian man in *L’Embassade* explained to me after I returned to Rabat a few days after the event, they had gone there ‘to get their rights’. Not much came out of the short meetings with diplomatic representatives but vague promises to help migrants lodging a complaint to the Moroccan police as well as to ease some of the criteria to obtain a consular registration card. The ‘rights’ mentioned by the Cameroonian man pertained to being treated by sub-Saharan consulates and embassies on an equal basis with students, businessmen and other sub-Saharans living in Morocco, a recurrent topic of conversation in ‘ghettoes’. However, migrants appealed to a broad sense of justice, not to specific treaties and conventions.

ALECMA members took part in the march, as well as representatives of other migrant associations, and were instrumental in mobilising people in the ‘ghettoes’ adjacent to *L’Embassade*. The focus on sub-Saharan diplomatic representatives was not surprising. Besides lamenting the brutality of Spanish and Moroccan authorities against migrants, discussions within ALECMA were often focused on lack of support, or overt hostility, from their diplomatic representatives, as illustrated by Lamine’s story (see Chapter 4). The places migrants lived in bore symbolic names such as *Le Consulat* or *L’Embassade*. Outside Dinar’s building, there was also a very small enclosed courtyard nicknamed ‘*Le Parlement*’ where migrants gathered in the evening to discuss common issues. The march was also an important catalyst in prompting

conversations in Taqaddoum and increasing ALECMA's visibility amongst migrants who often broadly talked of 'injustice'.

Recent studies concerned with citizenship have explored 'how the irregular movements and activities of people entail a shift in what it means to be political' (Squire 2011: 5). For instance, Isin develops the concept of 'insurgent citizenship' (2002: 273). He argues that

> being political means being implicated in strategies and technologies of citizenship as otherness. When social groups succeed in inculcating their own virtues as dominant, citizenship is constituted as an expression and embodiment of those virtues against others who lack them. […] Becoming political is that moment when the naturalness of the dominant virtues is called into question and their arbitrariness revealed (2002: 275).

Similarly, noting that citizenship is usually conceived in terms of status and practice, Isin and Nielsen (2008) and Nyers (2008) articulate the notion of 'acts of citizenship' by arguing for 'a focus on those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens – or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due' (Isin 2008: 18; see also Arendt 1951; Balibar 2004; Rancière 2004).

Such theoretical perspectives have provided valuable insights for analyses of migrants' protests. Drawing on Isin's work, McNevin examines the occupation of a Parisian church by a Sans-Papiers movement in 1996 to illustrate how 'insiders and outsiders to political communities are being constructed in new ways' (2006: 136). Similarly, Nyers (2003, 2008) builds on the works of political theorist Rancière (1999), and his focus on disagreements as constitutive moments of the political, to examine the strategies deployed by Algerian asylum seekers in Canada. Nyers highlights how such protests constitute 'a troubling anomaly to the sovereign order' (2003: 1072). As he puts it, 'through an impossible activism—"impossible" because the non-status do not possess the "authentic" identity (i.e. citizenship) that would allow them to be political, to be an activist—they make visible the violent paradoxes of sovereignty' (2003: 1080).

These approaches provide important theoretical contributions and political tools for a more comprehensive analysis of those Bauman has described as 'human waste' (2004). However, such critical accounts of citizenship and irregularity seem to

focus prominently on the 'host' state. I argue here that it is crucial to account for the ways irregular migrants simultaneously articulate political claims to different authorities. I want to draw attention to how sub-Saharan migrants articulated claims addressed to their own diplomatic representatives to denounce their treatment as second class citizens compared to sub-Saharan students and workers with a valid visa.

As noted by Nyers in his case study of the 'irregularization' (2011: 193) of a Sudanese-Canadian citizen suspected of terrorism, 'citizens, too, are subject to irregularizing practices and attempts to make them into irregular subjects' (2011: 188). Sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum were subjected to manifold forms of irregularisation as their own diplomatic representatives routinely denied them assistance or even collaborated with Moroccan authorities. Pierre-Marie often recalled to me how he was puzzled by conversations he had with sub-Saharan ambassadors who showed contempt for irregular migrants, referring to them as 'criminals'. He wondered whether they were trying to please him as a European with such discourse. Through ALECMA, members also often expressed the wish to denounce the general political and socio-economic environment in their home countries and point to ('*indexer*' as they often put it) the responsibilities of their politicians and governments.

Fig. 23 protest at the tribunal after the arrest of Senegalese migrants in their embassy.

In spring 2013, after brutal incidents (e.g. violent arrests and deportations of migrants, including many Senegalese migrants, some of whom were in a regular situation), a group of Senegalese organised a sit-in at their embassy to protest against the diplomats' silence and complicity with Moroccan authorities. The reaction was, as described by a journalist (Yabiladi 29-05-2013), 'fantastic [*rocambolesque*].' The embassy called for the intervention of the Moroccan police which violently arrested some of the participants within the grounds of the embassy. Almost a year after the march in Taqaddoum, ALECMA members joined other migrant associations and NGOs in June 2013 for several sit-ins (see Figs. 23 and 24) to denounce the collaboration of Senegalese representatives in Rabat with Moroccan authorities in the mistreatment of migrants. Migrant associations wrote letters to sub-Saharan embassies to complain. Rather than simply decrying injustice, the letters of protest, following suggestions by Nadia from GADEM, included long quotations from the Vienna convention on consular relations highlighting diplomats' duty of care for all their nationals.

Fig. 24 protest at the tribunal after the arrest of Senegalese migrants in their embassy.

Hence, ALECMA advocacy work and the focus on exposure was progressively imbued with a discourse of rights going beyond mere references to 'injustice'. As Eric

William put it to me, 'before I did not even know that migrants had rights.' ALECMA members became acquainted with notions that had been more or less unknown to them, such as regularisation or the rights of *sans-papiers*. Through interacting with other migrants' associations and NGOs in Morocco, especially GADEM and AMDH in Rabat, they became progressively integrated within existing networks of people concerned with migration and rights. Such networks extended beyond the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara desert through platforms such as MIGREUROP or Loujna Tounkaranké where activists, NGOs and academics share information and conceive joint actions to defend the rights of migrants. ALECMA took part in numerous sit-ins (Fig. 25) and meetings, as well as online activities, where the focus on regularisation was prominent. Its members progressively came to recognise their own organisation as political. Previously, at the time of its constitution, migrants in Taqaddoum had been reluctant to use such an adjective. They associated 'political' with partisan politics and Cameroonian Didi's campaign and were keen on gathering all migrants.

Fig. 25 A sit-in by Moroccan NGOs and migrants' associations outside the parliament on International Migrant Day on 18 December 2012.

In parallel with their relationship with charitable NGOs such as Caritas, ALECMA, especially through Eric William, developed a close relationship with

GADEM and collaborated on projects devised to hold Moroccan and European authorities accountable in the face of brutal violations of migrants' rights. Eric William, Stéphane from GADEM and I often worked at home together, chatting whilst writing our respective reports and fieldnotes. ALECMA participated in gathering evidence with Mathilde from GADEM and other associations in order to compile an alternative report on the application of The International Convention on The Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in Morocco (GADEM *et al.* 2013). Members became involved in numerous demonstrations and events to highlight migrants' rights and protest against brutal repression. This was not without risks, as migrant leaders were often targeted. Camara, a leader in *Le Conseil*, was arrested and tried for mock-charges of selling alcohol without authorisation. Eric William was followed by the police after a sit-in opposite the tribunal during an audience for Camara and arrested. Yet, members of ALECMA were often not shy about exposing themselves during events outside Taqaddoum, talking of their work as 'sacrifice' in an echo of what they said about their journeys and families.

Collaboration between the different associations was not without hiccups. Besides small arguments amongst (and within) migrants' associations over representativeness and other issues (e.g. personal rivalries), there were often clashes with NGOs. In response to NGOs inviting migrants to share information (especially pertaining to what was happening in the borderlands), some ALECMA members ironically commented 'we are the evidence' whilst hinting that NGOs were making a living from the hardship of their living conditions. During ALECMA meetings, Picas exhorted migrants to read up on the issues affecting them. Sub-Saharan migrants were gathering reports in Taqaddoum *cybers* about their own living conditions and the politics affecting them. They would write their own reports and spread them through mailing lists and Facebook groups about migration in Morocco where NGOs, activists and academics from Europe and Northern Africa were involved too.

For members, expectations were high and there was often a feeling of disappointment in the face of little, if any, progress in migrants' everyday lives in Morocco, although, as with the failed violent border crossing attempts, this frustration was often accompanied by irony (See Chapter 4). One unfortunate episode concerning Perez the 'SG' (aka General Secretary) in the borderlands was recalled in an ALECMA

meeting before he was back. Whilst involved in an 'attack' near Nador, Perez was caught by the *Alis* before he could start climbing the fence. Whilst being beaten up, he was overheard by other migrants shouting 'you don't know who you're dealing with. I am the SG of an association. [What you are doing here to me] is going all the way to Germany.' The story provoked outbursts of laughter in *L'Embassade* during Sunday meetings.

Fig. 26 ALECMA member outside Moroccan parliament at the time of the French presidential visit.

'A migratory association'

The theme ('another Maghreb and a different politics of migration are possible') of the Oujda Forum ALECMA members attended in October 2012 illustrates the links between advocacy for migrants' rights and the building of a state of rights more broadly in Morocco. As Hicham, general secretary at GADEM, put it to me, his advocacy work about migration 'was also for his children in Morocco.' Migrants, notably representatives from *Le Conseil*, took part in some of the *M20* demonstrations in 2011, stressing they were also part of Morocco and wanted changes. Migrant leaders and civil society actors in Morocco 'performing human rights' (Slyomovics 2005) together illustrates how citizens and 'aliens' participate in transforming the Moroccan polity. However, this was not without issues. At the Oujda forum, some migrants believed the conference should only be focused on sub-Saharan migrants and were

annoyed by talks about the violence endured by Moroccan and Algerian communities on both sides of the closed border. Moroccan human rights actors who had suffered torture during the 1960s 'years of lead' left the room when some migrant leaders started their speeches by profusely thanking the King.

In her analysis of the asylum system in Greece, Cabot examines how

> through a politics of exposure, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees assert forms of civil membership as persons entitled to lives that surpass the task of mere survival. […] [I]n part, both native Greek citizens and 'alien' subjects share in a similar political milieu: a newly emergent polis, a shifting landscape of citizenship (2014: 199).

However, despite mentioning the attempts by many migrants at leaving Greece for other European countries, she does not examine how membership claims and continued (im)mobility are articulated together. In this section, I focus on ALECMA's multiple goals and the continued crossing attempts by members calling for the regularisation of all irregular migrants in Morocco.

Analyses of migrants' protests and agency have often drawn on the paradigm of autonomy of migration, a concept which is 'at once a research program with its own distinct analytical tools and conceptual frameworks and also a political project that is connected to anti-racist social movements for refugee and migrant rights' (Nyers 2015: 26). The autonomy of migration perspective seeks to 'understand migration as a social movement in the literal sense of the words' (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008: 202) by 'stressing the social and subjective aspects of mobility before control' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 184). Rather than merely a response to socio-economic and political malaise, it examines migratory movements 'as a constituent force in the formation of polity and social life […]; migration is autonomous, meaning that it has the capacity to develop its own logics, its own motivation, its own trajectories that control comes later to respond to, not the other way round' (*ibid*).

Such a perspective offers valuable insight by 'looking at migratory movements and conflicts in terms that prioritize the subjective practices, the desires, the expectations and the behaviours of migrants themselves' (Mezzadra 2011: 121). For instance, in Chapter 4, I discuss migrants' migratory journeys by focusing on imagination and desires. However, the choice of the word 'autonomy' is as confusing as my informants' recourse to '*migration choisie*'. Despite claims that 'this does not

of course mean that mobility operates independently of control' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 184), such an approach seems, like many studies concerned with migration according to Bakewell, to 'skirt around the problem of structure and agency' (2010: 1690).

Furthermore, as Walters has it, not all practices and discourses by migrants have the radical potential entailed by the autonomy of migration perspective. He argues that

> such a position risks a repeat of the mistake made by all those who, at the height of Western socialism, posed the relationship between reform and revolution in rather stark either/or terms. That is, it threatens to ignore, or worse, dismiss a whole range of practices and acts on the grounds that they do not qualify as sufficiently radical (2008: 191).

Rather than the 'either/or terms' implied by the 'autonomy of migration' approach, it is more useful to consider the complex dynamics within irregular migrants' relationships with state actors and beyond (for instance with families as explored in Chapter 7). Furthermore, de Certeau's distinction between 'tactics' and 'strategies' is helpful to explore migrants' participation in the political realm. As he has it, 'strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces' (2002: 30). The emphasis on 'autonomy' obscures the ways migrants' [im]mobility entails what Vigh calls 'navigation': 'the practice of moving within a moving environment' (2009: 425; see Chapter 4). Migrants in Morocco were not autonomously 'imposing spaces' but engaging with Moroccan authorities and other actors.

Furthermore, in articulating 'acts of demonstration', Walters claims that focusing the analysis on 'acts of citizenship' runs the risk of overlooking other kinds of politics 'in which subjects refuse the identity of citizen, perhaps because they explicitly reject the rights, responsibilities and commitments that are associated with the citizen, or out of preference for other identities' (2008: 193). However, I would argue that here Walters comes close to discussing political practices and citizenship in either/or terms too for, as illustrated below, many ALECMA members simultaneously sought regularisation in Morocco and attempted to cross into the EU.

ALECMA is 'a migratory association [*une association migratoire*]' Picas said when his tongue slipped as he was describing and promoting the association to other migrants in Taqaddoum. As described above, like ALECMA's objectives, the

members' migratory projects were ambiguous. Most ALECMA members did not cease to move. They would go to the borderlands, wait there, fail to cross, end up in Oujda and struggle to return to Taqaddoum to consider their options once again. Whilst some managed to cross to Europe, others returned to their home countries or went somewhere else. During meetings, Picas would often stress that migrants should get involved with the association and that personal journeys would not be an issue whether people wished to stay in Morocco, return home or attempt crossing into Europe. As explained above, ALECMA was often talked about in terms of its three dimensions ('*trois volets'*) and aimed to represent all irregular migrants in Taqaddoum (and sometimes beyond).

When I shared my puzzlement over the fact that ALECMA members held banners asking for regularisation during sit-ins (e.g. international migrants day, protests outside the tribunal etc.) but were often preparing themselves for attacks in the borderlands, Eric William gave me his typically laconic answer: 'why not?' For sub-Saharan migrants within ALECMA, 'fighting' for migrants' rights and articulating political claims in Morocco was not contradictory with border-crossing attempts. Political mobilisation was inscribed in their attempts at navigating everyday life and the hostile politics of migration whilst engaging with their quest for the 'objective'. Many of those still trying to leave would explain that they might stay in Morocco if 'conditions [were] better'. The articulation of migrants' and ALECMA's ambiguous 'objectives' is illustrated by how some of my informants transformed their failed attempts into 'field missions [*mission de terrain*]'. I spent much time with some of them typing 'mission reports' in Taqaddoum *cybers* following unsuccessful attacks near Nador and Tangier. Upon returning to Rabat, migrants would write up on the current situation and give new examples of police brutality they had encountered and share it with NGOs and other migrants' associations.

Similarly, when Stéphane and Guillaumar settled in the marginal neighbourhood of Boukhalef near Tangier to prepare their crossing attempts in the summer of 2013, they acted as relays to provide information to Rabat regarding a period of increased police brutality in northern Morocco. They were always referred to as ALECMA members. Chimita, a Cameroonian from *L'Embassade* and member of ALECMA though he was often away near Nador or Tangier, was the leader of a

group of migrants who went on hunger strike and refused to board a flight deporting them to Senegal in 2014. It was through him that NGOs like GADEM received information. Hence, when I asked whether migrants ceased to be ALECMA members upon leaving Taqaddoum or Rabat, Picas and others would stress that people never ceased to be ALECMA members, sometimes portraying it as a lifelong membership. Yet, the continued mobility of ALECMA members was not always beneficial as projects were often dropped when members left. For instance, ALECMA was keen to portray migration as 'an advantage' (e.g. for migrants but also for countries of immigration like Morocco) in order to counter negative portrayals from dominant hostile discourses but also NGO reports focused on violence. They set up an online blog to share positive stories along with news about repression in the borderlands. The project, which further highlights the ambiguity over representation of migration amongst ALECMA members, was abandoned when Sylvin, who was managing it, finally crossed to Europe.

Squire (2011) stresses the need to account for 'politics of mobility' as well as 'mobilizing politics' when discussing irregular migration. 'Mobilizing politics' is conceived in a dual sense. It means

> to politicize mobility through examining how the movement of people, in particular the 'irregular' movement of people, is constituted as an object of and as a subject of study [as well as to render] politics mobile through exploring how the irregular movements and activities of people entail a shift in what it means to be political (2011: 5).

However, ALECMA illustrates how analyses of 'mobilizing politics' need to account for and not obscure migrants' mobility. Citizenship studies have highlighted that irregular migrants' simultaneous undermining and reinscribing of the boundaries of citizenship posits a paradox. Hence, McNevin notes that Sans-Papiers movements in France 'seek formal inclusion within France via regularization in such a way as to accept and reinforce its existing boundaries' (2006: 146). In the context of irregular, sub-Saharan migration in Morocco, practices and discourses over irregularity and [im]mobility are not only contested, appropriated and re-appropriated by migrants and other civil society actors as well as Moroccan authorities but simultaneously embedded with EU concerns about the externalisation of its borders. Hence, conceiving migrants' political activities solely in terms of citizenship practices within Morocco leaves no

space to acknowledge that politically active sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco might simultaneously seek to better living conditions in Morocco and also continue crossing to Europe. Instead, I follow Coutin who, in her analysis of how Salvadorian migrants inhabit different spaces across borders, pays attention to 'the ways that incompatible realities are true simultaneously' (2007: 5). She argues that social realities belie the apparent coherence inherent to how migration is conceptualized since 'nations can be interspersed, boundaries can be relocated, membership can be partial, "citizenship" can be multiple, and movement can be multidirectional or even, at times, stationary' (*ibid*). In fact, leaders from *Le Conseil* who had been arguing for the regularisation of migrants in Morocco for a few years would also share with me the view that working or studying in France was something they were still considering for the future. Like active members within university student politics, migrant activists in Taqaddoum sought changes over a situation which directly affected them although their presence might (or might not) only be temporary.

From early on, the mobility of ALECMA members throughout Morocco and beyond was expected by Picas and Pierre who hoped that the association would have 'offices' in significant places for sub-Saharan migrants like Fez, Nador and Oujda as members moved throughout the country. When two inhabitants of *L'Embassade* decided to return to their home countries by undertaking the journey back through Algeria and the Sahara, there were talks of them founding sister organisations in Cameroon and Nigeria. However, like many people who left Morocco, they cut off contact with acquaintances in Taqaddoum. Some ALECMA members expressed the wish to get involved with a different set of issues, wherever they would be next if they left Morocco. Discussing what he had experienced and learnt with ALECMA, Nottingham explained he wanted to set up an organisation for orphans and other children living on the street – an issue related to his personal experience and which he held dear. Many also expected that in Europe they would face difficulties and expressed the wish to get politically involved once there. As Perez often put it, he was 'a revolutionary fighting injustice everywhere.' He explained that through his involvement with ALECMA he had learnt much and was thinking of going to university in Europe to do something about law and human rights. Through ALECMA,

my informants were also broadening the scope of their own 'objective' by considering new paths, such as more active political mobilisation, for 'finding their lives'.

Border crossing as politics

I joined Perez and his roommates resting in *Le Consulat*, chatting about politics after unsuccessfully looking for work on a late spring morning. They waved at me to join in their discussion about *Françafrique* and the rigged contracts for French entrepreneurs in the Ivory Coast. We sat in a thick cloud of cigarette smoke, our conversation accompanied by a stream of *Zouglou* music oozing from a mobile phone's speaker. As often, there was an eerie echo between their words and those of the West African bands' lyrics playing: 'our leaders are led' [*nos dirigeants sont dirigés*] someone avowed soberly, the words ringing back to a song by Ivorian singer Tiken Jah Fakoly which was playing just a moment before. Daou turned to me: 'in the Ivory Coast, we are told we are foreigners, in Burkina Faso we are told we are foreigners, in Mali too. Your grandparents did this, they put up borders. We are divided. Do you have family working in the administration?' Ahmed laughed and cut him off before I could think of something to answer. 'One day we will get rid of all our leaders at once, and abolish borders in Africa' he said, solemnly.

They were eager for me to listen to something and Daou put on another track.[33] The song, by Burkinabe Sam's K Le Jah, addresses African youth, recalling a glorious past and highlighting that if Africa is '400 years behind', it is because of the slave trade which has enriched European capitals. Shortly after talking about the Senegalese *Tirailleurs* who died 'protecting democracy in Europe', he lists some of the assassinated leaders, Sankara, Lumumba and the others who tried to elicit change in Africa. A few long seconds after the phone's speaker had gone quiet, Ahmed broke the silence and asked me: 'Did you understand? What is your conclusion?' Luckily, he had one of his own and he quickly added:

> This is why we go to Europe. We go looking for our right, our grand-parents' right. […] Africa will change. The adventurer who comes out and returns will not go to the *maquis* to down a few bottles. He will know what to do with the money to evolve, but catching up will be hard.

[33] Downloaded from the internet in a Douar Hajja internet café: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qpWr4xuqWU

Bayat's articulation of 'life as politics' (2010) provides a valuable insight for the analysis of irregular migrants' political agency which does not reify any 'autonomy' whilst also acknowledging crossing 'attempts' as themselves political. In examining 'the ordinary practices of everyday life' (2010: 18), Bayat argues that the movement of irregular migrants is an illustration of what he calls '"the quiet encroachment of the ordinary", [which] encapsulates the discreet and prolonged ways in which the poor struggle to survive and to better their lives by quietly impinging on the propertied and powerful, and on society at large' (*ibid* 15).

As further examined in Chapter 7, for sub-Saharan migrants, suffering entailed a right to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Besides migrants' quest for a better life for themselves and their families, and as illustrated by the discussion in *Le Consulat* recalled above, adventurers' arduous journeys and the 'objective' are tied in with postcolonial issues and speak to the future of a whole continent and its relationship with Europe. In Taqaddoum's 'ghettoes', migrants did not just 'pass the time' watching South American telenovelas. Lamine once made me listen to Thomas Sankara's 1987 'against the debt' speech delivered at the Organisation of African Unity. Rolling news channels like France 24 were often on TV and discussions would turn to diverse socio-political issues pertaining to the African continent such as neo-colonialism and *Françafrique*. For migrants, the right to cross to Europe was inscribed in the tumultuous history between Africa and Europe: from slavery to murky European intrusions into corrupt national governments.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the birth of ALECMA, a migrant association within Taqaddoum – a neighbourhood of Rabat made of 'illegal habitats' – set up by irregular, sub-Saharan migrants. It is necessary to investigate how illegality, as an 'everyday, embodied experience of being-in-the-world' (Willen 2007: 10), is lived-in and challenged by migrants in Morocco. Recent studies in citizenship and irregular migration drawing on the 'autonomy of migration' perspective have placed a prominent focus on migrants' subjectivity and the radical potential of migrants' protests. For instance, in her articulation of 'social abjection as a theory of power,

subjugation and resistance' (2013), Tyler examines migrant protests within Britain and argues that they 'respond to and expose the abject politics of citizenship, often by *harnessing abjection as a form of politics*, and in so doing offer us routes for thinking of political agency in ways which both fracture and exceed the frame of neoliberal citizenship' (2013: 74). However, I argue that in order to better account for irregular migrants' involvement in politics, it is necessary to examine the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the articulation of political claims by migrants. In the case of ALECMA, the blurry set of goals mirrored the ambiguous 'objective' of migrants 'looking for their life' and constantly gauging opportunities as they often simultaneously considered staying, continuing and returning. The original emphasis on 'fighting migration' also echoes ethical dilemmas for 'adventurers' pertaining to self-representation (see Chapter 7).

Furthermore, although an emphasis on 'citizenship' provides important theoretical tools to examine how irregular migrants participate in the building of the Moroccan polity and changing conceptions of what it means to be political, it is crucial not to limit an examination of migrants' protests to a 'host' state and also account for their wider range of claims. ALECMA members were concerned with holding their own diplomatic representatives accountable and their focus on justice was also aimed at NGOs providing support to migrants in Rabat. Furthermore, although ALECMA members voiced claims of 'regularisation' for all migrants in Morocco and were embedded with several actors fighting for a state of rights in Morocco, they were also involved in preparing border-crossing attempts ('attacks') in the borderlands to reach Europe. Others also returned to their home countries (see Chapter 4).

In discussing the protest by *Sans-Papiers* at the Saint-Bernard church in 1996, Balibar stresses what 'we', the political community, 'owes' them. He argues that the protest of those irregular migrants has 'recreated citizenship among us, insofar as it is not an institution, nor a status, but a collective practice' (2000: 42). Analyses from citizenship studies quoted above are crucial in order to account for migrants' claims to participate within the polity and to open up discussion about what being political means. However, I would add that 'we' owe it to the irregular migrants to account fully for the complexity and sometimes uncertainty of their political claims. That ALECMA migrants held banners asking for regularisation in Morocco and kept

preparing attacks in the borderlands is not a contradiction but an illustration of how migrants navigate the political realm with a newly acquired vocabulary of migrants' rights to 'find their lives' in an uncertain political context. Those who failed to cross would discuss their failed attempt as a field mission to continue denouncing the ordeal of migrants in Morocco; failure to cross stirred a productive process and reoriented migrants' own quest for a life more bearable. They would often stress that if things improved in Morocco, then they might stay.

Confined to a violent 'space of non-existence' (Coutin 2000) in a marginal neighbourhood also inhabited by many disfranchised Moroccans (see Chapter 3), sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum were not passive victims, and the remainder of the thesis continues the exploration of how migrants coped with precarious and violent living conditions in Morocco. Chapter 2 examines how irregular, sub-Saharan migrants self-organised in houses they called 'ghettoes' and 'foyers' such as *L'Embassade*.

Chapter 2 Ghettoes and Foyers

'*L'Embassade* has been attacked', Eric William laconically reported to me on the phone. On the previous day, the building's absent landlord and his wife, accompanied by youths from the neighbourhood, had stormed into *L'Embassade,* a decrepit two-level house in Douar Hajja referred to as 'a ghetto' by its (mostly Cameroonian irregular migrants) inhabitants (see Chapter 1). Earlier that year, the landlord had conned the migrants into signing a new lease, in Arabic only, for a six-month period, assuring them it would be automatically renewed. Once the contract ended, he requested them to leave, which they refused to do. It was not clear whether he wanted the building back or had come under pressure from neighbours and the police to evict them.

Shortly after the issue with the contract, electricity and water supplies were cut off. The tenants had collected the money for the bills but naively paid the landlord rather than *Redal*, the water and electricity provider. The landlord kept the money and never paid the bills. Living conditions became even more difficult and, over a few months, tension escalated between the landlord and the migrants, who refused to leave or pay any more money towards the rent, fines and utility bills. Eventually, the landlord incited some local youths to raid the building.

The place was ransacked. They stole or left shattered the already dilapidated furniture, broke the doors, and hit the migrants – two people, luckily uninjured, were thrown over the rooftop's bannister. Several neatly packed bags, containing passports and other valuable possessions, which belonged mostly to people preparing to "voluntarily" return with IOM, were snatched, thrown out of the windows and piled up on the street. Eric William was angry when he described how some of their neighbours would leisurely try on the stolen clothes to see what fitted them. Of all that was stolen, only a chair was retrieved when migrants tried to recover their belongings. In the midst of the attack, some policemen in uniform arrived. They were called by the landlord who had complained about noise and fighting in his property, where, he claimed, migrants were squatting. Eventually, the police managed to separate the two parties but arrested only three sub-Saharans, who were ill and lying in bed, though fortunately they were swiftly released and not deported.

When I reached *L'Embassade*, people were angry and talked of revenge, although it was quickly decided it would only make things worse. Yassine, the chief of ghetto in *L'Embassade*, a title discussed below, as well as Picas, Eric William and myself, went to the nearby police station on Avenue Houmane al Fatouaki to plead with the superintendent. We were accompanied by Didi, the recently elected leader of the Cameroonian community association in Morocco, an organisation associated with the Cameroonian embassy.

The superintendent welcomed us by gravely declaring he felt 'African' and believed 'dialogue should not be confined to books and university'. With an unfitting cheerful tone, he gently scolded the sub-Saharans: 'I have been working in this district for years, it is the first time sub-Saharans come and see me. You should come before there is any crisis, so I can help.' Glancing at me, he added 'I don't care if people have papers or not.' Eric William thought he probably mistook me for 'a member of a European NGO.' Didi and Picas, by far the most diplomatic compared to taciturn Yassine and quick tempered Eric William, did most of the talking and joking with the policemen. Despite promises by the superintendent and help from GADEM in writing their own complaint, things at *L'Embassade* worsened. The involvement of Didi, which many in *L'Embassade* saw as an opportunistic public relations exercise amongst Cameroonians, did not go further. Nothing at all came from the Cameroonian diplomats, with whom migrants were already disabused (as highlighted in Chapter 1).

L'Embassade's inhabitants were initially very vocal about standing their ground, but the place became increasingly empty during the day. Those who did not work took shelter in Cameroonian Samy's restaurant at the ground floor of the opposite building. They worried that thugs or the police could storm in at any time. Eventually, the police evicted the few who had not already moved out. Fosto, who resisted arrest, was jailed for six months for illegal occupation of the house and threats to the landlord. Many blamed Yassine for being a bad 'chief of ghetto'; others complained about the noise and the lack of discipline amongst migrants.

In this chapter, I examine migrants' housing arrangements and their self-organisation, which recall a classical topic for political anthropology. As Das and Poole have it, 'political anthropology staked its unique claim for understanding the political precisely by asking how order was maintained in so-called stateless societies

such as the Nuer' (2004: 6). Criticizing classical political anthropology as too state-centred, Clastres (1987) points out that societies can flourish without a central state and a division between coerced and coercers. However, as noted by Gledhill, stateless societies are not necessarily devoid of any forms of 'coercion, oppression or inequality' (Gledhill 1994: 13).

Though not stateless, irregular sub-Saharan migrants were ignored or rejected by their own consular authorities. Moreover, they were largely left to organise themselves in the shadows of a Moroccan state more concerned with the negative imposition of order (e.g. borders) rather than the facilitation of ways of living (e.g. health care and education) as already explored in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I draw on recent scholarship on refugee camps as more than simply spaces of 'bare life' (Agamben 1998). For instance, Agier asks: 'can the refugee camp become a city in the sense of a space of urban sociability, an *urbs*, and indeed in the sense of a political space, a *polis*?' (2002: 322). The end of *L'Embassade* marked a growing trend in Taqaddoum during my fieldwork as migrants moved away from more hierarchical and overcrowded ghettoes to smaller rooms in the neighbourhood. Thus, this chapter examines whether migrants' self-organized housing arrangements in Taqaddoum demonstrate more than simply a state of exception but also a resilient and potentially transformative social life. After addressing the socio-political significance of such spaces in the light of recent anthropological work on encampment, this chapter details the self-organisation of migrants in houses, which they called 'ghettoes' and 'foyers', and compares such dwellings in Taqaddoum with forest camps in the northern borderlands. Finally, it highlights some issues regarding home-making for migrants within Taqaddoum.

Ghetto, camp and the jargon of exception

The concept of 'exception' has become prevalent in studies of migration that engage with Agamben's revisiting of the archaic figure of Roman law, *homo sacer*, or the sacred man who can be put to death, but where the taking of his life amounts to neither murder nor sacrifice. According to Agamben, bare life (or sacred life) does not entirely correspond to *bios* (political life), nor does it to *zoē* (natural, animal life) as distinguished by Aristotle. Rather, it is the 'zone of indistinction in which *zoē* and *bios*

constitute each other in including and excluding each other' (1998: 90). Drawing on Arendt's figure of the stateless (1951) and Foucault's notion of biopolitics (1979), Agamben claims that the camp is 'the new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet' (1998: 176). As people living in these spaces are stripped of their political statuses and reduced to bare life, the camp is 'the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation' (1998: 171).

Agamben's analysis of bare life has inspired scholars working on migration and asylum. Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, drawing on ethnographic work on detention in Australia, Malaysia and Thailand, argue that 'it is through the exclusion of the depoliticized form of life that the politicized norm exists. […] The refugee or other irregular migrant, the detritus or remainder, is integral to the sovereign law that encompasses the interiorized humanity' (2004: 33-35). Put outside the realm of law, refugees and irregular migrants are reduced to bare life as *homines sacri*, trapped in 'an abject condition of speechlessness which leaves them little or no remit to challenge ill-intentioned depictions (as well as occasional brutality or violence)' (2004: 37).

This 'jargon of exception' (Huysmans 2008) has become prevalent in the analyses of migrants' marginality, which point to a 'return of the camps'. Following Malkki (1995a) and Agamben (1998), scholars like Le Cour Grandmaison *et al* (2007) and Bernardot (2008) examine the historicity of the use of camps for the bio-political management of populations in France (e.g. the "Arabs" during the colonization of Algeria, the Spanish republicans after the Civil War etc., sometimes using the same spaces). Pointing to administrative detention systematically enforced for a wide array of purposes, they denounce infringements of the rule of law. Similarly, for Valluy, countries such as Morocco are buffer-states for Europe's migration policies and practices; they form a zone of exception that can be conceived as a vast camp (2007a: 147).

However, as Mühle puts it, we ought to 'think crises from themselves rather than from a transcendental and archaic externality' (Mühle 2007: 74). Since Agamben posits what Huysmans calls 'the exception-as-the-rule' (2008: 167), there is a danger of seeing the figure of *homo sacer* as uniform and transcendental. Further, legal processes are fundamentally undetermined struggles involving diverse tactics and

multiple actors. For instance, Coutin shows the inadequacy of Agamben's sovereign-*homo sacer* dichotomy when she examines how 'a myriad of practices, usually carried out by people who have no connections to the government, produce knowledge that constitutes individuals as citizens, illegal aliens, legal residents, asylees and so forth' (1993: 88). Spaces of exception appear not as 'ghostly presences from the past but rather as practices embedded in everyday life in the present' (Das and Poole 2004: 13).

Walters argues against Agamben's portrayal of migrants as 'passive, almost helpless beings':

> for all its critical thrust, Agamben's line of thinking seems to lead us away from a dynamic agonistic account of power relations and instead fosters a rather one sided and flattened conception of migrant subjects. *Things are always done to them, not by them***.** Only occasionally are they granted the capacity to act, and then in desperate ways (Walters 2008: 188, my emphasis).

Hence, Isin and Rygiel argue for the investigation of frontiers, zones and camps as both 'abject spaces' and 'spaces of resistance' to examine how 'different kind of abject spaces employ different strategies to reduce people to abject inexistence, not only creating varying conditions of rightlessness but also making different logics and acts of resistance possible' (Isin and Rygiel 2007: 185). For instance, in her analysis of the destruction of migrants' camps around Calais, Rygiel urges us to 'consider not just how the camp functions in the politics of control but to take the camp itself as a social and political space created through social relations that are developed in and as a result of movement' (2011: 4). As illustrated by Atkinson in her research on children in a Zambian refugee camp, some important aspects of refugees' lives are often overlooked: 'the fact that they live, learn, work and play like any other children' (2007: 317).

Similarly, in her analysis of refugee camps at the Thai-Burma border, McConnachie argues that

> refugees are constrained by and vulnerable to external forces (including national politics in Thailand and Burma, and the politics of international humanitarian agencies) but they are not entirely the subject of power imposed from above. Through refugee-led camp committees, community based organizations and political organizations, refugees also exercise and negotiate authority. The camp space therefore is not an isolated space of 'exception' but a pluralistic and networked web of legal and political relationships (2014: 32).

She demonstrates how living in a refugee camp does not simply entail a loss of 'individual, communal and societal coping strategies' (2014: 30) that leads to a state of anarchy and total breakdown; it is neither located outside the realm of normal experience, nor subjected to unfettered power from above. Challenging the pre-conception that camps host passive refugees, she vividly describes how refugees cope and are integral to complex encampment processes where space for autonomy, although restricted, exists. Sub-Saharan migrants living in 'foyers' and 'ghettoes' in Morocco highlight a similar contradiction to the one McConnachie highlights at the Thai-Burma border: 'the host State plays an essential role in defining the conditions and circumstances of encampment at a political level but on a daily basis is largely invisible, even irrelevant, to the refugee population' (2014: 46). Despite the complex processes leading to the marginalisation and illegalisation which halt, or decelerate, sub-Saharan migrants' mobility, they are still largely left to organise themselves in Taqaddoum. Whilst Chapter 1 focused on political organisation, Chapter 2 focuses on living arrangements amongst migrants.

In moving beyond studies which have simply applied Agamben's figure of *Home Sacer* and the notion of exception, McConnachie takes into account Wacquant's 'three pernicious premises' which, he argues, have dominated the study of the American ghetto. Wacquant (1997) points to the dangers of de-historicising, exoticizing and failing to acknowledge the internal social organisation of ghettoes. He criticizes the '*dilution of the notion of the ghetto* simply to designate an urban area of widespread and intense poverty, which obfuscates the racial basis and character of this poverty and divests the term of both historical meaning and sociological content*'* (1997: 341; original emphasis). The terms 'foyer' and 'ghetto' used in the present chapter are not analytical shortcuts, rather they were employed by the migrants themselves to describe their housing arrangements.[34] The emphasis on policies and the state in Wacquant's work on urban marginality (2008) echoes anthropology's recent attempts at re-thinking margins and the state together (Das and Poole 2004). As Wacquant puts it, 'one must stress that a ghetto is not simply a topographic entity or

[34] Having stressed that 'foyer' and 'ghetto' are emic terms amongst irregular, sub-Saharan migrants, I will omit the inverted commas for the remainder of the thesis.

an aggregation of poor families and individuals but an *institutional form*, that is, a distinctive, spatially based, concatenation of mechanisms of *ethnoracial closure and control*' (2008: 49).

Therefore, without celebrating 'illegality', it is necessary to focus on exclusionary politics as well as 'the benefits and resources that hold out such promises to be excluded' (Somers 2008: 24). Reversing Agamben's assertion that the camp has replaced the polis, Agier analyses innovative social as well as political life emerging in refugee camps and asks whether refugee camps have the potential to become a city in the sense of both an urban space and a political space, an *urbs* and a *polis* (2002: 322). His work on refugee camps such as Daddab in Kenya points to the complex ways refugees are subjugated to a 'humanitarian government' whereby life is characterised by an enduring present and a state of permanent precariousness. However, he pays attention to how 'beyond the legal and political exceptionality, real life is constructed in the camps as a social life that is largely resilient, and in its own way, also transformative' (2011: 86). Having outlined some theoretical contributions on the issue of encampment, I explore below the social organisation of some of Taqaddoum's ghettoes.

L'Embassade

From the outside (and before its demise), *L'Embassade* was just an ordinary building with a typical brown metal door, similar to other buildings' entries in the neighbourhood. The ghetto was not far from Avenue El Farah. From a street corner where many Cameroonians could be seen hanging out by a small shop selling snacks and cigarettes, a couple of sharp turns into the maze of corridors led to *L'Embassade*. The door of *L'Embassade* was often shut, but a short rope dangling from a hole would trigger the inside lock when pulled. In the event of immediate danger, the rope would be pulled back inside. This unimpressive protective device did not prevent thugs and police from coming in. The first time I stepped inside *L'Embassade,* Picas called it "*Black Hawk Down*" and pointed to neighbouring terraces from where bottles and stones were regularly thrown onto them by hostile Moroccan neighbours, in particular,

an elderly woman with a good aim.[35] Nottingham once described *L'Embassade* in Taqaddoum as 'heaven within hell.' The ghetto was a refuge from the multiple dangers located outside, yet, as illustrated above, the protection it offered was feeble.

Fig. 27 Terrace on top of *L'Embassade*.

Immediately behind the brown door was the first flight of bare concrete stairs leading to a narrow and dark landing from where one could access two windowless bedrooms scarcely furnished with three run-down single mattresses tucked against one another, topped with thin but neatly folded blankets. The small rooms were bare save for some tidily packed bags and clothes on coat hangers dangling from nails stuck in the walls. There were scribbled names and phone numbers on the walls from previous occupants. An even smaller third room, the only one with a door and a lock, belonged to Yassine, the chief of ghetto. Adjacent to this was a tiny toilet, with just a hole and a flimsy tap, where the rough and ill-fitting wooden door was not enough to contain a rancid stench. As chief of ghetto, Yassine's first duty seemed to be shouting at people to close the toilet door and empty buckets of water down the hole.

[35] From the eponymous movie depicting the infamous US army mission in Somalia. The movie was partially shot in Rabat-Salé.

Fig. 28 Terrace on top of *L'Embassade*.

Accessed from the second flight of stairs was the sunny L-shaped rooftop of the building (Figs. 27-28). The top of the stairs was covered by wooden planks and a few plastic sheets protecting the house, but water still trickled down inside when it rained. An old truck tyre and some junk had been put on top of this ramshackle structure to prevent it from blowing away in the wind. Because the floor was made of bare concrete on the rooftop terrace, sub-Saharan inhabitants called it *la dalle* (the slab). During the afternoon, it was struck by blazing sunshine since the terrace was well exposed despite being surrounded by taller buildings. In summer there was hardly any breeze, and it would get scorching hot. The terrace was cut short by the bare red bricks of the adjacent building. Along the terrace, a bannister of raw red bricks, over a metre high, was erected and stood close to the opposite building (Fig. 29). People often chatted across with other sub-Saharan migrants, mostly Malians, living on the other side.

Fig. 29 The bannister on top of *L'Embassade*.

The first part of the terrace was crisscrossed with wires over which colourful laundry was often drying. There was some basic cooking paraphernalia (plastic cups and plates, pots and gas bottles) scattered near a single tap fixed in the bannister. That part of the terrace was occupied by the successive cooks (see Chapter 6) and their customers, inhabitants of the building, but also migrants from elsewhere in Taqaddoum and sometimes beyond, who sat on wooden crates from the market or small gas bottles. A broken bed frame was also used as a bench. The terrace was the centre of gravity in *L'Embassade* but it was most lively in the early morning when people were having breakfast and later on in the evening when people came back from work. Migrants would gather to chat, play cards, exchange information, laugh and argue. During the day it could be quite empty, depending on how many people lived there at the time, on work opportunities, and whether the cook was any good. As the threats of an imminent police raid and an attack by thugs led by the landlord were getting more concrete, migrants stayed away from *L'Embassade*. Many would be found at Marmiton's restaurant, located further away in Douar Hajja, on a street usually spared from police raids.

Fig. 30 The second part of *L'Embassade's* terrace.

Another ramshackle shed-like room with two mattresses split the terrace in two. Others slept in the second part (Figs. 30 and 31) of the terrace where some mats, a mattress and a couple of blankets were tucked away behind a metal sheet during the day to make space for people hanging out and eating. During the summer, inhabitants would seek the coolness of the rooftop slab to get some sleep, but winter was tough and those allocated a place on the rooftop only had a large blue plastic sheet hung across to protect them from bad weather.

Internal Organisation

Houdou explained that after working and saving money in Maghnia (Algeria) and crossing to Oujda, he came straight to Rabat.

> I came here to rest a bit, to think, to see how I would process in order to go into the forests. Also, I had not rested since Cameroon. When I arrived into town, the taxis, they already know where to take you. They tell you that the black neighbourhood is in Taqaddoum. There I met people at the *placette*.[36] I was taken to *L'Embassade* and I paid the integration [see below].

[36] *Placette*, a derivative of *place* (square) with a diminutive suffix, was another word for the place commonly referred to as *château*. It was mostly used by Cameroonians.

Others first reached *L'Embassade* after an unsuccessful attempt at crossing the border, sometimes following migrants who already knew the ghetto. Some advice had been given from friends and relatives already in Taqaddoum or elsewhere about where to go and how to get there. After a short ride from Rabat-Ville train station by taxi, most migrants were left at the entry of what taxi drivers called the 'black neighbourhood'. Usually, like Houdou, if they had not already been given the name of some ghetto to go to, they would simply 'ask some black hanging out by the slab about where to stay.'[37]

Fig. 31 The second part of *L'Embassade's* terrace.

Houdou was directed to *L'Embassade*, the Cameroonian ghetto, on the basis of his nationality. Most new arrivals were brought to ghettoes where their nationality was the dominant one, though there were exceptions. Travelling companions from different nationalities may wish to stay together, and some nationalities sometimes kept together since they were in smaller numbers. *L'Embassade*'s building was solely occupied by migrants. The term ghetto simply referred to a space, often a derelict and confined room or whole building, where a significant number of migrants lived

[37] The slab synecdochely referred to the large, concrete slab next to the *petit taxi* stand at the entrance of Taqaddoum. It was a synonym for *placette* and *château*.

together. It pointed to their self-organisation, although the arrangements could differ greatly, but also to both transitory and permanent characteristics of migrants' dwellings as they were often continuously inhabited by successive migrants staying for various lengths of time. Ghettoes can be found all along migratory routes and not only in Morocco (Traoré and Le Dantec 2012). Although migrants often underlined the negative connotations of such places, as discussed below, they also pointed out that living in a ghetto meant a much lower rent.

Inhabitants in *L'Embassade* were numerous, but it was nearly impossible to assess the exact figure. The first time I visited, Picas told me there were about thirty people living there. This was during the summer, a time when many migrants in Taqaddoum made their way to the forests. Houdou told me that in addition to the five-to-seven people staying in his room on the first floor, there would be about six more during the winter. Such spaces were largely transitory for migrants. As Houdou put it to me, *L'Embassade* was 'a place to sleep in while you wait and think about new horizons.' Once they had rested, healed and found the money, people usually moved on, although migratory projects often failed and migrants would have to return to places like *L'Embassade*.

L'Embassade, because of its size and relative longevity (it was said to be one of the oldest remaining ghettoes in Taqaddoum, having been steadily occupied since at least 2006), was also a place where migrants would come and sleep for a few days before finding another place to stay. For instance, Patrick stayed there three nights before finding his own room. The number of occupants in each room often changed, and the figures I was given differed as people would sometimes count the people away in the forests as regular inhabitants. Also, *L'Embassade* increasingly became a place of 'disorder' as Houdou and others lamented. People seemingly in charge had little clue as to who lived there, especially when water and electricity were cut off and inhabitants stopped paying the rent altogether.

In any case, rooms were clearly overcrowded and unhygienic. Health issues in Taqaddoum's ghettoes, especially skin conditions such as scabies, were common and could spread fast. There were occasional peaks of tuberculosis, but this was also linked to health issues amongst Moroccan populations. Though it was another important reason for bettering the living conditions of sub-Saharan migrants, NGOs were careful

not to talk of a 'public health issue' which could backfire and feed into the already repressive discourse of the Moroccan government. Treatment was available from NGOs such as Caritas, but as Pierre-Marie pointed out to me, 'you treat the place with *ascabiol* but one week later another person arrives and they have scabies. And you cannot treat again right away otherwise people develop some immunity if you do it twice on them like this.'

Houdou, and others I spoke to in *L'Embassade*, paid 150dh monthly rent. Those who arrived and could not find a place in a room would pay 50dh a month to sleep on the concrete slab of the terrace. Cameroonian Franck did so for four months. When he arrived in *L'Embassade* a Cameroonian friend he knew from Algeria welcomed him. Franck explained that previously, new arrivals would have three days to rest and decide whether to stay, in which case they would start paying the rent, or just leave and settle somewhere else. This was no longer the case when I arrived, as Patrick had to pay for only a few nights before moving somewhere else. Deciding to stay implied paying the '*integration'* fee, a one-off sum, usually 200dh for this particular ghetto, paid by newly arrived inhabitants when they decided to stay. The integration money was said to be for the 'material' one would find upon 'integrating into a room.' Objects (mattresses, blankets, pots, etc.) had been accumulated by former and current inhabitants. The integration money was a contribution set up both to buy the right to use existing material and to replace or buy new items for the benefit of all in the room. It was reminiscent of the '*droit de ghetto*' (ghetto right) from the forest camps described below. Water and electricity bills were divided at the end of the month amongst the inhabitants.

Money for the rent and the integration was supposed to be paid directly to the chief of ghetto. Although individual shares of the rent were fixed, people moved in and out, and the overall figure fluctuated. Despite having to pay a fixed rent to the landlord, the chief of ghetto did not always raise the same amount every month. Discussing money matters with migrants in Taqaddoum was more difficult than talking about entry points in the borderlands. Yassine always avoided the topic with me, telling me that each *chef de chambre* (chief of room) was in charge of the people inside the room and collected the integration money. Whenever I asked about details which would help piece together how the rent and integration fee worked, he would

give me confusing information or get annoyed with me. In *L'Embassade*, like in many other ghettoes in Taqaddoum, the chief was presumably making some money from running the place. In compensation for ensuring that things went smoothly, he would take the extra cash once the money had been paid. People pointed out that it was not a large amount of money and that when there were not enough people inside the ghetto, the chief would have to make up the difference to the landlord. It required good management skills from the one in charge in order to keep people happy and find new inhabitants when needed, especially if one did not want to have to pay a substantial part of the rent every month. The integration money could end up in the chief's pocket too rather than being used to pay for new materials.

In *L'Embassade*, the chiefs of rooms reported to the chief of ghetto who was in charge of the overall discipline and smooth running of the house. Besides paying up the costs associated with the ghetto, there was a simple set of rules to enforce: people should not steal or fight with one another. When I asked about penalties if they were not observed, I was told a one-off payment of 1000dh would have to be paid. In *L'Embassade*, as in other ghettoes where this rule existed (the sum of money varied but remained substantial), nobody could remember a single occurrence of someone paying that much. It was meant as a deterrent. Ostracizing the culprit was more common, I was told. People who refused to comply with the existing rules and created disorder would be asked to leave at the end of the month. 'Avoiding noise' was crucial, firstly to avoid conflicts within the house, but also from spilling over to Moroccan neighbours who might seize an opportunity to pick on the migrants. Mere bad neighbouring issues could bring about more serious problems with the police. Another duty was to maintain cleanliness and overall hygienic conditions at tolerable levels in the house. In other places, the chief of ghetto set up a cleaning rota but in *L'Embassade* things started to deteriorate towards the end as Yassine could not get people to do their chores.

Yassine had not always been the chief of ghetto. This role was generally the responsibility of the person who had lived in the house the longest. Such people were sometimes referred to as the *anciens* (elders). It was not age but longevity within the house which conferred authority to chiefs of ghettos. Whenever the person in charge left (e.g. to cross to Spain, or simply away from Taqaddoum), the next in line would

take over. People sometimes refused if they knew they would not be around for too long. Before Yassine, Cameroonian Richard had been the chief of ghetto. Asked about the organization of *L'Embassade*, migrants who had been there long enough would compare Richard, whom they usually deemed a tough but fair chief of ghetto, with Yassine, whom they described as belligerent and inefficient. After discussing rules in the house with Yassine, I mentioned them again to other inhabitants of *L'Embassade*. They laughed at the one forbidding fighting, since the previous night Yassine had punched another migrant in the face. Yassine was a taciturn and lonesome figure in the house. Many other migrants living with him said he was not respected because he did not respect others.

Fig. 32 Souleyman looking out of the kitchen window in Maadid.

In contrast to Taqaddoum, or even the whole of Morocco, which was often described as 'hell' by migrants, places like *L'Embassade* were talked about as safe havens. Yet, as described above, the place had been stormed by thieves and policemen more than once. Its closure was a blow to the migrants, and afterwards they often sat down on the ghetto's concrete step by the entrance, remembering happier days there. Despite all this nostalgia, people had already started leaving the ghetto to settle somewhere else long before the landlord called the police after inciting Moroccans to break in. Migrants had complained about *L'Embassade* being a place of 'disorder'

where people were constantly arguing, fighting and stealing. Cameroonians were described as 'unruly and cunning' by other Cameroonians. Yet, whilst some, especially those who remembered the times when Richard was in charge, were nostalgic for an era when discipline and order reigned, others I met in Taqaddoum left their ghettoes precisely because of rigid discipline and authoritarian leaders. Ivoirian Souleyman and his roommates often recalled to me their bad experience with large houses. The three of them had recently left a ghetto in Douar Hajja to settle together in a room in Maadid (Fig. 32). I asked Souleyman what it was like to live in a ghetto.

> I have lived in a foyer, I have suffered. Every day we were fighting for anything. Often there are problems about money, and behaviour issues. The *anciens* are a serious problem. They will come and decide on some programme, saying people have to give twenty dirhams each. If he does not like you, he will do anything to get you out. Thank God here we have no problem, we are a few living together. Sometimes the *anciens* see that they cannot get [what they want] out of you; they do not like you. When you arrive you are asked 400 or 500dh. I have paid a *droit de ghetto* in Douar Haja, 400dh. Foyers are dirty and there are a lot of people. Here is like a *tranquillo*.[38] That is what we call it, because it is *tranquille* [peaceful]. In the house where I was before, we were with Mohamed and other *Peuhls* [Fula]. The problem in the foyers is that the *anciens*, the chiefs, treat you like slaves, it is slavery. They tell you that you have to clean the house today, you have to do this. And if you are not happy, there are problems. Also they take money from you, they put money into their pockets. Living all together is not easy, people are different, there are people from cities and countryside together for instance. Some people have not gone to school. You share a bed with many people. You do not know them, you come back to the house and you find someone on your bed. He has his feet on the bed or something. It is not easy. People might have contagious diseases, it is not easy. That is why some people prefer to struggle to pay a room for 700dh than staying with other people, they prefer that to a whole lot of problems.

The terms 'foyer' and 'ghetto' were often used interchangeably by migrants, although there were some differences discussed below.[39] Very hierarchical and authoritative housing arrangements such as those recalled by Souleyman had previously been the norm as described by Alioua (2007). Migrants would be parked in sordid ghettoes where they would pay for everything, including food. Only one person,

[38] The term 'tranquillo' was usually employed when talking about informal camps in the forests or very short term hide-outs (e.g. close to the border and prior to an "attack" on the fences). Some migrants occasionally used it to designate more horizontal housing arrangements in Taqaddoum.
[39] Meaning a 'hearth' in French, as a synecdoche the terms stands for a house.

usually the chief of ghetto, would leave the house to go and fetch food. Trips to the borderlands would be arranged and paid for in the house too. Such strict housing arrangements seemed to be disappearing at the time of my fieldwork. Eric William often protested to me that ghettoes still existed, but the places he described as ghettoes were called that because of the high numbers of inhabitants or because a whole building was occupied by migrants. However, in such places, rooms were often rented out separately by different migrants and there was no central, overarching authority. The only place I visited which featured a powerful authoritative figure was a Nigerian ghetto run by Mr Paul. This Nigerian man was in charge of several ghettoes in Douar Hajja occupied mostly by young women, whom some informants hinted were sexually exploited. We could not usually enter without him being there. When they entered the ghetto, the Nigerian women would kneel down at his feet to receive his blessing. Mr Paul decided everything. I was also told that some non-francophone Malians were living in very strictly run ghettos in Douar Hajja; however, I did not manage to get access.

Le Consulat

Often referred to as the second longest remaining Cameroonian ghetto after *L'Embassade*, *Le Consulat* was also described by many as a foyer and not a ghetto. Also, it was no longer solely occupied by Cameroonians. Following violent altercations between the Cameroonian inhabitants, Jamal the Moroccan landlord and other Moroccan neighbours, the migrants had prior to my arrival in Rabat all fled the place. Later on, some Cameroonian migrants eventually came back and new ones joined. Ivoirians lived on the ground floor, Cameroonians on the first floor, and Guineans on the top, in a room next to the apartment occupied by Jamal and his mother.

Fig. 33 The central room in *Le Consulat*.

Le Consulat (Fig. 33) was located more centrally within Douar Hajja than *L'Embassade*, along a busy street running uphill from the market stalls. Behind the metal front door of the building was a bare concrete flight of stairs leading to the first floor. Directly behind the front door lay a battered, ill-fitting wooden door made of different panels and suggestive of the many break-ins the migrants had suffered. There was a hole big enough to fit someone's head just above the inside lock. The most striking thing upon entering *Le Consulat* was an overwhelming stench and humidity. It was much darker than *L'Embassade*. The only light came from the bedroom at the back where, in the ceiling's right corner, part of the concrete slab between the two floors had either been left unfinished or smashed (Fig. 34). In that corner, the mesh of steel bars were visible. Similar openings on each floor all the way to the rooftop allowed daylight to filter to the ground floor, albeit dimly. The light was further obstructed as migrants living on the upper floors used the metal structure to store bags and large items.

Fig. 34 The ceiling in *Le Consulat*.

Hygienic conditions were terrible in the Ivoirian part of *Le Consulat*. The toilets located on the left hand side, directly under the stairs, were extremely narrow and pitch dark. The floor was a mess, and pipes leaked from the toilet into the central room, a rectangular fifteen square metre room where the floor and up to a metre and a half of the internal walls were covered with dirty, patterned tiles of brownish and yellowish cubes. The optical illusion from the design rendered the place even more oppressive. The central room was littered with rubbish soaked in a permanent puddle of dirty water by the main door; in the middle towered a large concrete pillar around which were arranged some gas bottles, a few pots, and some wooden crates on which to sit. (Fig. 35). Except for the wall with the entrance, each of the three sides of the central room offered doorways into the three bedrooms (Fig. 36). They were of varying dimensions, but none larger than half the surface area of the central room. A fourth room, much smaller, was the only one with a padlock; its door had been battered like the front door of the flat. Aziz, the Ivorian chief of ghetto, slept there.

Fig. 35 Le *Consulat*'s central room.

My Ivorian friend Perez slept in the room on the right hand side. Like the others, the bedroom contained a few small, worn-out mattresses aligned along the rectangular shape of the room. There was a useless, broken TV and some other electronic paraphernalia. Clothing and cream lotions were tucked between the mattresses. The number of inhabitants varied but there were typically many more people than single mattresses. The place was overcrowded. Like in *L'Embassade*, Perez and others paid 200dh as a one off integration fee upon entering *Le Consulat* and 150dh for the rent each month. Aziz was the chief of ghetto, though he was more often referred to as the '*responsable*' (manager). There was also a *proprietaire de ghetto* (ghetto owner) who lived away from Taqaddoum but came regularly to sort things with the Moroccan landlord. He was the one who had secured the place and negotiated with Jamal, the Moroccan landlord. The manager (Aziz) reported to the (sub-Saharan) owner and collected the money on his behalf. He also dealt with Jamal who lived upstairs. Pecuniary arrangements were very unclear. As in other places, the sub-Saharan owner was making money whenever there were enough people in *Le Consulat*, but as people pointed out he could lose some. It was not clear what Ivoirian Aziz was making out of it apart from, I was told by others, living rent-free. It must

have been little as he spent all his time sitting on a wooden crate outside *Le Consulat*, making a little money as a street-cobbler.

Fig. 36 The largest room in *Le Consulat*.

Things progressively became more complicated as Jamal started interfering with the running of the foyer and collecting money directly from people. He was actively looking for more '*camarades*' to move in *Le Consulat* to increase his earnings. As further described in Chapter 3, the situation was untenable around *Le Consulat* due to conflicts with neighbours and an increasingly greedy landlord. Ivoirians were reluctant to leave; they wanted to stay together as they were 'used to each other'. Eventually, Ivoirian Aziz left after obtaining refugee status and moving to a different neighbourhood. The next in line for the position refused to take over the management of the ghetto as he wanted to leave for the forests very soon. In the end, the Ivoirians walked out and the Cameroonians upstairs were considering moving too. Perez and a handful of the others stayed together. They moved to two small rooms on the decrepit ground floor of another building in Douar Hajja where another small room was already occupied by Cameroonians.

Perez and some of his other roommates often stressed to me that *Le Consulat* was not a ghetto but a foyer because they lived 'in harmony'. Ivoirians migrants would frown at mention of *L'Embassade*, saying that in *Le Consulat* people did not fight one

another, that they were all equal and respected one another. Though there were issues too, *Le Consulat* was indeed far quieter than *L'Embassade*. Yet, as illustrated by Souleyman above, the term 'foyer' was also used interchangeably with 'ghetto' to describe a hostile and altogether undesirable place to live in. In Taqaddoum, as migrants tended to leave collective, hierarchical housing arrangements run by an authoritarian central figure, the term 'foyer' was increasingly used to refer to more jointly run houses or rooms, where discipline and decisions were dealt with more collectively. The figure of the 'chief' sometimes endured, especially in houses where people had just left a large ghetto and where there were still a significant number of inhabitants. He was then often referred to as '*chef de chambre*'. As in ghettoes, the role implied dealing with the landlord and the rent. Duties, however, usually stopped there.

Fig. 37 The room shared by Lamine and his roommates.

Mamadou from Guinea worked as a carpenter in a workshop located barely a couple of metres away from *L'Embassade*. He lived in Maadid in a well-kept but decrepit ground floor three-bedroom flat. One room was occupied by Malians who did not interact much with the others. The room Mamadou was in charge of was mixed with Senegalese and Guineans. The third room was Senegalese only. Mamadou and some of his roommates had left a large, mostly Malian, ghetto because they were not

happy with the living conditions there, especially the behaviour of those in charge. Mamadou did not like being called a chief. His duties only involved dealing with the landlord on behalf of his five or six other roommates. Because he was deemed a fair and hard-working man, people, including migrants living in the adjacent rooms, looked up to him and valued his opinion. Confusingly, he usually referred to the whole ground floor as a foyer.

Fig. 38 The kitchen at Lamine's.

In rooms where there were fewer people, or where migrants had ceased living in ghettoes for longer, the word foyer was often no longer used. At Lamine's (Fig. 37), where on average three to four Burkinabe lived together, foyers and ghettoes were usually derided. Lamine would stress that in his room, they simply lived together, sharing the costs equally and having mundane arguments over whose turn it should be to clean the room. Relations with the landlord were dealt with by Papou, the Burkinabe man who had been in the room the longest. Thus it was only I who used the term 'chief of room' and only because of its use in other places such *L'Embassade*. Lamine always insisted there was no chief in their room. The apartment they stayed in had a second room (occupied by Guineans with whom they were usually on good terms) as well as a small kitchen (Fig. 38) and a shared living room (Fig. 39) – it was much larger than most migrants' accommodation I visited in Douar Hajja.

Fig. 39 The shared space at Lamine's flat.

Whilst Lamine lived in the same room throughout my stay in Morocco, other informants such as Eric William and Stéphane, moved several times; they both left *L'Embassade* to settle into single rooms. Stéphane, with his friend Estra and two other Cameroonians from *L'Embassade* (Fig. 40) occupied a room which they took great pains to keep tidy despite its narrowness. It was located in a building solely occupied by migrants in small rooms, save for the elderly and alcoholic uncle of their Moroccan landlord, who had a very small room to himself. Eric William moved with his cousin and a friend of his from *L'Embassade* into a much nicer room, about nine-square metres, which could be locked, where the walls had been freshly repainted. There were new, bright tiles, and a small window offered enough natural light. His room had another grid-door with a lock that led to a small lobby from which one could access the bedroom of a Cameroonian woman living on her own. This was not uncommon; several sub-Saharan migrants preferred to live on their own, especially women and older people like Kit who explained that living alone was the only way to avoid disrespect from other younger migrants.

Fig. 40 Stéphane and Estra's room.

Eric William often pointed out to me that it was cheaper to live in such smaller units since in ghettoes 'the chief puts money in his pockets.' In ghettoes, extortionate amounts of money for the rent were divided into relatively small, individual contributions as many people lived together. Yet, those were still exorbitant given the quality of the accommodation. Landlords usually were aware of this and were complicit since they could make more money from the rent. The landlord at *L'Embassade* was clearly lying when he told the police he thought he was renting the place to only one person. In smaller rooms, rent was also high compared to prices for Moroccans, and the quality of accommodation could greatly vary – some rooms were made of bare concrete, others were better furnished (Fig. 41). Some landlords did not want their places to be turned into ghettoes with many migrants for fear of damages. In their new place, Perez and his roommates paid about the same amount as in *Le Consulat* since they were still many living together (around five). Eric William and his two roommates, who did not want to share with more people, had to pay greater individual contributions than in *L'Embassade*. The landlord too did not want more people to move in and the rent was high. Finding a balance between getting away from overcrowded ghettoes and paying a reasonable price for the rent was not easy. Despite the cost, such a move was deemed necessary by most. After Perez had left *Le Consulat*

with some of his roommates, he moved out again to settle with two Cameroonians in a much nicer though more expensive room. He told me he was glad to have 'taken his independence' and felt much better living in the new place.

Fig. 41 Another flat in Stéphane's building.

Whilst we were chatting his room, Eric William explained that previously it had been very complicated to find a house: 'Before we would be at least ten in each room, it is more like five on average now. Before it would have been impossible to get a bedroom like this one, with tiles. It used to be dirty, abandoned places like *L'Embassade*'. He said that a few years earlier it had been more difficult to find accommodation and live in smaller numbers. However, he also noted a rise in prices for the individual rooms, often between 500 to 700dh per month. It had become easier to negotiate directly with Moroccans to get a room, without having to rely on one sub-Saharan migrant to conduct negotiations. Previously, many Moroccans had been wary of repercussions from the Moroccan authorities if they were to rent out their properties. They still were, but it had become easier to find rooms, according to my informants. Migrants who had lived in Taqaddoum for long periods could use their contacts with Moroccans and other migrants to find places to stay more easily. However, Taqaddoum often became saturated, especially during the winter. Pierre-Marie at Caritas explained they were struggling to find suitable places for migrants to move into. They had criteria, and were mindful of the living conditions in the places they

visited. A lot of sub-Saharans looking for a place were far less selective, but they still struggled. Like Moroccans, migrants in Taqaddoum often had recourse to a Moroccan *simsar*, a middle man who specialized in property rentals and would link house owners and potential tenants for a fee, albeit far less than an official agency. Prices, however, had gone up in recent years according to migrants in Taqaddoum. Paying 500dh for a room had been average in 2011, but migrants in 2012-2013 complained that for such a price they would get filthy holes and needed to pay closer to 600-700dh for a more decent place, if they could afford it.

Migrants often circulated between the same places. As mentioned above, Ivoirian Souleyman moved to the room where Lamine and the other Burkinabe previously lived. Whilst looking through a pile of worn-out clothes and junk in a corner of the flat, Lamine and I found some identity documents which belonged to other western African migrants who had lived there before. Nobody there knew who they were, or where they could be. After Perez and his friends moved out of *Le Consulat*, they brought me to their new place. It was a room where Picas and some others had lived following the loss of *L'Embassade*. They had quickly moved out of this very dilapidated and dirty ground floor set of rooms. They had complained to me that the landlords' son living upstairs had leprosy and that following the amputation of one of his legs, his parents would bring him downstairs to stay next to the migrants' room so that the pus dripping from his stump would not soil their house upstairs. Picas and the others, disgusted by this and by the overall unsanitary living conditions, quickly packed up and left. But the rooms available for sub-Saharan migrants were often the same. Leaving a place where the Moroccan landlord was abusive only made space for other migrants to move in. As mentioned above, *Le Consulat*, previously a single Cameroonian ghetto, was deserted by migrants following fighting with Jamal and Moroccan neighbours. It quickly filled up again with Ivoirians and others. When Perez and his friends left, the Cameroonians and Guineans upstairs were considering leaving as well. Jamal, the Moroccan landlord, expected it and was actively looking for other migrants so he could sustain his exploitative income.

The accommodations and types of organisations in Taqaddoum varied, but most migrants were trying to get away from more hierarchical and tightly controlled situations, usually located in dilapidated houses, that is, if they could afford it.

Different types of housing could be found in the same building. For instance, a small room (Fig. 42) hosting around ten Ivoirian and Malian migrants was called ‘ghetto Bouaré’ (named after the chief of ghetto who lived in his own room further away on the same street). It was located in the basement of a very dingy building where the migrants shared a small, grim toilet with three Cameroonians who lived in the adjacent, smaller room; they explained that it was not a ghetto, that they simply shared a room.

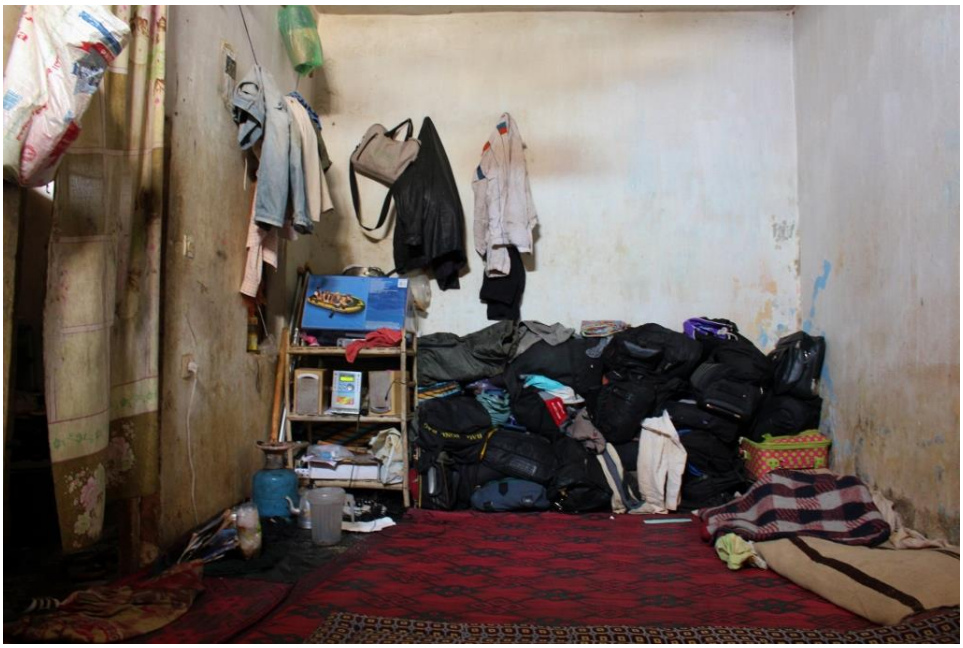

Fig. 42 Malian ghetto Bouaré.

Dinar, a Cameroonian migrant who had been in Morocco since 2009, ran a restaurant with his girlfriend in a room within a building occupied mostly by Cameroonian migrants in Taqaddoum. A charismatic and resourceful man, Dinar was trying to increase his own authority on the street he lived in Douar Hajja. Many migrants were already indebted to him because of his restaurant and also because he was involved in the business of selling zodiacs and other items necessary for crossing the sea to migrants.[40] One day while I was chatting with him and my friend Eric William, another Cameroonian man passed by and jokingly addressed him as *mbombo*, which Eric William later on explained meant ‘elder [*ancien*], doyen, village chief’ in the Bassa dialect. Dinar told us how he had recently been involved in settling disputes between migrants, both amongst Cameroonian and other nationalities. He explained

[40] As explained in the Introduction, “zodiac” refers to a precarious, inflatable rubber dinghy on which sub-Saharan migrants paddled to cross to Spain.

to us that he, as well as Yassine and other chiefs of ghetto, would receive the people involved in the dispute and ask them to bring bottles of Moghrabi, a cheap red wine which could be purchased in the nearby small supermarket. Dinar referred to the wine as 'Christ's blood' and claimed that after all the wine had been drunk and the different parties had given their versions, a settlement would be reached. Eric William explained that this was reminiscent of some dispute settlements in Cameroonian villages where elders would pass judgements and a bottle would be drunk during the event: 'at the end, the problem stays at the bottom of the bottle; Christ's blood thing just makes me laugh.' Pierre and Eric William did not take those meetings, or Dinar's attempt at increasing his authority, very seriously. Pierre called Dinar 'a dinosaur' who was trying to 'return' to practices seen previously in the forests. They thought he was simply taking advantage of newly arrived migrants who were naïve.

Forest camps

As mentioned in the introduction, the original intention was that this thesis would compare the socio-political organisation of migrants in urban and forest camps. Although the scope of the research changed, it is nevertheless crucial to include a brief discussion of forest camps at this stage. Life for migrants in Taqaddoum was closely linked with the context in the northern borderlands. First of all, the presence of migrants in urban neighbourhoods within Rabat, Fes, Casablanca and other Moroccan cities is related to the tightening of border controls near the Spanish enclaves – the 2005 Ceuta and Melilla events (see Introduction) and the ensuing period of intensive repression in the forests led many migrants to flee towards cities' marginal neighbourhoods. Further, during my fieldwork, a significant number of migrants in Taqaddoum were actively seeking to cross to Europe and were going back and forth between the borderlands and Rabat.

The terms 'ghetto' and 'foyer' as well as the housing arrangements they designate were brought to Taqaddoum by migrants from past experiences in the borderlands near the Spanish enclaves, but also from further away in Maghnia and other stops on the main migratory routes. The abusive authoritarian rule of chiefs of ghettoes denounced by my informants in Taqaddoum was reminiscent of the very strict hierarchy and discipline associated with forest ghettoes. Up until the 2005 Ceuta and

Melilla events, sub-Saharan migrants had been living in ever increasing numbers within the forests around the Spanish enclaves. Mahmoud Traoré, a Senegalese migrant who participated in the 2005 attacks on the border near Ceuta and subsequently wrote an account of his perilous journey to Spain, vividly describes how mounting pressure from Spanish and Moroccan authorities cornered sub-Saharan migrants into a very difficult situation. These migrants were increasingly unable to cross, whilst the stream of new arrivals continued, putting further strain on their already arduous living conditions.

Laacher (2007), CIMADE (2004) and Faleh *et al.* (2008) show how migrants living in informal camps in the forests of Bel Younech (near Ceuta) and Gourougou (near Melilla) were organized by nationalities. Each community looked after a set of makeshift shelters built with recycled and newly bought material such as wooden planks and plastic sheets. These shelters were regularly destroyed by the 'Alis', the nickname given to Moroccan *Forces Auxiliaires* who track down migrants in the forests; they were then rebuilt by the migrants. Traoré describes how in Bel Younech ghettoes were organised by nationalities and sub-divided by regions of origin – the informal camps were located in different parts of the forest, more or less close to one another depending on the relations between the different communities. Aside from shelters, rudimentary churches and mosques were also erected, or simply delimited on the ground. There was also a market to sell produce and objects brought from the nearby Moroccan villages and cities by audacious migrants who had gone out of the forest and evaded Moroccan authorities.

Traoré explains that the 'Senegalese government' was composed of a chairman, a first minister, and a secretary, and that although there was no superintendent, there were nevertheless policemen to protect the community and the authority of the chairman. Further, he notes the existence of 'international conferences' organised by the different chairmen to agree on sets of rules to regulate life in the forest between the different communities – such institutions were nicknamed 'the African Union'. In the face of tensions, migrants set up some '*casques bleus*' to settle disputes amongst themselves.[41] Furthermore, a head chairman, nicknamed the 'king of the

[41] From the French nickname for the United Nations peacekeeping force.

forest', also facilitated contacts between the different nationalities as well as with the Moroccans involved in the business of border crossings.

As pointed out by Traoré, the strict discipline and hierarchy in the Bel Younech forest was often justified by some as necessary to ward off chaos and to counter the despair and precariousness of their lives. However, order needed to be maintained so that the economic exploitation of migrants by other migrants could carry on. Indeed, he explains how the different "governments" needed to be renewed periodically as authority figures were presumed to have levied enough money from the other migrants. Crossings, by sea and land, were strictly organised by the chairmen, sometimes linked with Moroccans also involved in this business, and it was forbidden to leave on one's own. Migrants needed to pay the necessary 'right of ghetto' and attempt the border crossing through the proper, though costly, channels in the ghettoes. However, he notes that the self-organisation of migrants was not uniform everywhere. Hence, at the time of his stay, the forest of Gourougou near Melilla hosted no chairmen but only some minor chiefs, mostly in charge of organising supplies and meals, who levied only a minor percentage on border crossings.

Chairmen and other authoritative figures were usually those who had been present the longest in the ghettoes and forest camps. Claims to leadership and authority were linked to traditional forms of authority such as village elders in the countries of origin. In Taqaddoum too, migrants often referred to village elders when explaining to me that the most '*ancien*' migrants were in charge of overseeing the functioning of ghettoes and foyers – although they would add that if age mattered too, in ghettoes the *anciens* were those who had stayed there the longest. However, such appeals to traditional authority could easily mask a coercive grip of some migrants over newly arrived migrants (Traoré and Le Dantec 2012: 11).

In his recollection of the mounting tension prior to the 2005 events in the borderlands, Traoré illustrates how the impetus to organise large-scale 'attacks' on the fences of Ceuta and Melilla was the result of mounting pressure and brutality from Spanish and Moroccan authorities. Yet, frustration with the authority and exploitation by chairmen, who were unable to help migrants crossing despite benefiting economically, also led migrants to disobey the rules and the strict hierarchy.

Since 2005, organisation in the forest camps has undergone many changes. Eric from *L'Embassade*, who had also acted as chairman in a very hierarchical Cameroonian ghetto in Maghnia, explained that he lived in the forests around Nador in 2007-8. He described to me how Moroccan forces were constantly combing the forests, that 'columns of *Alis*' could be seen swirling up at dawn, pushing the migrants uphill to hide. Helicopters were often hovering over their heads. There were no ghettoes at the time according to Eric, people lived in small groups of five or even less, sleeping on the grass and on rocks 'like jihadists', eating tortoises and living from begging and eating from bins in Nador whenever they managed to go into town without being caught. He explained that more formal ghettoes started again after he left in 2008-9. According to many NGO members I spoke to, this was the time when the intense period of police harassment of migrants in the borderlands and cities started to decrease, only to be revived in autumn 2011, the year I arrived in Morocco.

Migrants in Taqaddoum often joked about life in the forest ghettoes and the discipline enforced there. Whenever we discussed the differences between Taqaddoum and the borderlands, they would point out that out there you could get 'whipped' if you broke the rules regulating communal life (e.g. disobeying the chairman, stealing, and fighting). Physical punishment was meted out by the chairman and his advisers. In many ghettoes, migrants were still expected to pay a '*droit de ghetto'* the first time they arrived. If they did not pay up or pretended to have nothing, they would be 'passed through the scanner', one of the most begrudged practices from the forest. A migrant who did not pay could get beaten up, searched or left in a pit until money was presented by them or sent out by their family. In the forests, daily tasks (e.g. fetching water, firewood, begging in Moroccan markets, cooking) were divided and usually assigned by the chairman who could pass judgement on anyone and be assisted by his personal police. In Taqaddoum, tales of life in the forest varied but all stressed the hardship of sleeping rough and struggling to find food or work in comparison to living in Rabat's peripheral neighbourhoods and other urban settings where migrants congregated. Also, regardless of whether they had dealt with authoritarian leaders in the forests, they usually pointed that, overall, in Taqaddoum migrants could usually do what they wanted.

Yet, according to sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum, such practices were justified in the forest since too much 'noise and disorder' could create problems for everyone by triggering more intervention from Moroccan forces. Nevertheless, although all migrants stressed the authority of the chairmen, some highlighted that changes were occurring and that not all ghettoes were the same. Maestro, who had just come back from living in the forests around Nador for a year, explained to me that practices such as 'the scanner' had been forbidden. If one could not pay the 100dh to enter the forest camp, one could do so by regular small instalments. He also stressed that though some chairmen were pocketing money more attention recently was paid to ensuring that integration money was actually used for communal purposes (e.g. transport to hospital). Also, some migrants in Taqaddoum made fun of the chairmen, whose authority usually extended only to naïve, newly-arrived migrants. Furthermore, many of my informants had very little to do with larger, informal camps around the Spanish enclaves. They preferred to stay in Rabat and go up north only whenever they were ready to make an attempt with a zodiac, a small boat, or climb the barrier in a small group. Thus they would stay for as little time as possible in the forests, usually on their own, and come back if the attempt failed or looked too risky.

From ghettoes and foyers to 'homes'?

In Taqaddoum, migrants' criss-cross movements within the neighbourhood to find suitable accommodation mirrored their overall confined and constrained mobility as they went back and forth between the borderlands and Rabat to attempt crossing to Spain. Yet, as described above, and despite fragile living conditions, the permanence of migrants' presence in Taqaddoum was visible from the increasing number of houses they dwelt in, albeit precariously. The term 'integration' was solely used by my informants to refer to the process of moving into a ghetto, a foyer or a room with other migrants. Yet, the shift in housing arrangements contributed to migrants' actual integration within Taqaddoum itself. However, migrants were not yet 'home'. In places where they described their housing arrangements as completely different from a foyer or a ghetto, labels were no less blurry. Lamine, Eric William, Stéphane, Guillaumar and others who lived in such places often referred to them as '*maisons*'.

In French, '*maison'* stands for both house and home. Sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum were constantly stumbling over the ambiguous term.

Fig. 43 Guillaumar's room.

As described above, such places varied and could range from nicely finished rooms (such as Eric William's) to very dilapidated places no different from unsanitary and over-crowded ghettoes. In many, though, migrants had invested a lot more time in making the place more comfortable. At Guillaumar's, in a room he shared with two other Cameroonians (Fig. 43), posters had been put up on the walls to decorate the room. A curtain was hung over the small window, and their belongings were nicely tidied. He had also created a makeshift lampshade out of paper. In such places, hygienic standards were usually higher. Inhabitants were less numerous and had more time to look after the place the way they wanted it. They had also accumulated more belongings and small plastic furniture in which to store them. Though these places felt more comfortable, they were not home yet. Standing on the street outside Marmiton's restaurant, where she was living alone at the time with her baby, Picas and Marmiton were chatting; both casually referred to the restaurant as '*maison*', until Marmiton stopped Picas and said '*à la maison*? Leave it, this is not my *maison*, my *maison* is in Cameroon not here.' Similarly, Eric William would talk about the place he was

currently living in as *maison*, but interrupted me when I used the word, saying it was not.

Some of my informants, such as Lamine, did not always mind the use of that particular word, but most sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum lamented, '*on est pas chez nous ici*' (we are not at home here). Landlords usually ranged from hostile and aggressive to patronising. In all cases, migrants were charged a lot of money to stay in a place where they had little control over what they could do. For instance, they often complained they had difficulties in receiving visitors in their houses. In the Guinean room next to Lamine's, migrants often grumbled about abusive neighbours downstairs who would try to charge their friends money whenever they wanted to go up the stairs to visit them. Having female visitors was even more complicated. Mostly, migrants complained about how the places they lived in could be stormed at any time by Moroccan thugs; police routinely raided houses where migrants lived, often the same ones, even at night. Doorframes were often empty and many of the doors, as in *Le Consulat*, had been mended many times with pieces of wood and occasionally, following an attack, lay battered and useless on the street. 'Do you call this home?' an inhabitant of *Le Consulat* asked me pointing at the damaged door lying outside after an attack. Smaller rooms were often deemed safer than large ghettoes as they attracted less attention from police raids and were often padlocked against thieves. Yet, the types of houses they lived in changed neither the conditions migrants faced on the streets of Taqaddoum nor their dealings with Moroccan police.

Conclusion

L'Embassade and *Le Consulat* were not simply spaces of relegation for migrants; in those derelict buildings, they organised their own living arrangements. Whilst previous studies have focused on formal refugee camps, the self-organized ghettoes and foyers in Taqaddoum also testify to the resilience and transformative character of social life (Agier 2010). If migrants' ability to make decisions and act may appear more obvious in ghettoes and foyers than in refugee camps since there is no permanent presence of NGO workers, this chapter has also illustrated how such arrangements, in the margins of the state, were constrained by authorities. For instance, police harassment and failure to protect migrants had consequences for *L'Embassade*, just like organisation in forest camps was altered following a changing context in the borderlands. Also, as

illustrated above and in Chapter 3, migrants' 'illegality' meant sub-Saharans renting in Taqaddoum could be in a very precarious position with their landlords and neighbours. Yet, they were not stripped of 'coping strategies' (McConnachie 2014: 30), nor were they 'entirely the subject of power imposed from above' (*ibid* 32).

Life in sub-Saharan migrants' accommodations was not devoid of coercion. The hierarchies and discipline drawn from traditional forms of authority in countries of origin, or at least justified by referring to them, could also be very coercive. The articulation of such traditional authority in Moroccan ghettoes would require more analysis but it is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, Chapter 7 returns to some of the issues mentioned above in discussing the complex dynamics amongst migrants in ghettoes and foyers to highlight the limits of solidarity. Chapter 3 takes further the discussion developed here in relation to the issue of 'home'; specifically, it examines one of the reasons migrants often explained they did not feel 'at home' in Taqaddoum, namely the ambiguous and complex relationships between sub-Saharans and Moroccans in the neighbourhood.

Chapter 3 Hopeful Encounters

'I'll go up to him and say "*kee dayr? Bekheer"?* [How you doing? You alright?]' Jamal, a Moroccan in his thirties, smiled, spreading his arms wide open to show Anas and me how he would greet Omar. I flinched at the sound of Jamal flicking with his tongue a razor blade concealed in his mouth. Clenching it between his teeth, he mimicked slitting Omar's throat, then froze to gauge my reaction. I was stunned; when he had casually placed the blade in his mouth five minutes earlier whilst chatting with us, I thought it was merely chewing-gum.

Omar, whom Jamal wanted to kill, was not a sub-Saharan migrant but another Moroccan inhabitant from Douar Hajja. He owned the internet café close to *Le Consulat*, the ghetto located in the derelict building owned by Jamal's mother and managed by Jamal whenever he was not in prison. The night before, Omar had attacked and wounded three sub-Saharans from *Le Consulat*. Staring at me through the glasses he had broken in the ensuing brawl with Omar, Jamal recalled how his mother and wife had eventually dissuaded him from using his machete. He was still angry: 'Omar is not from here, he is from the countryside, the mountains. He should be with cows. That's his work. He is ignorant. He is a racist, he hits *azzi*.[42] […] He thinks he is a bandit, he is a *bambino*, *I* am a great bandit.'

Unaware of the previous night's events, I had come to look for Perez, my Ivorian friend from *Le Consulat*, when I was met by Jamal and Anas in a solemn assembly outside the main door. We entered the damp, dirty and windowless central room of the three-bedroom foyer of the Ivoirians, and sat on broken wooden crates and small gas bottles. There were no sub-Saharans on the ground floor that morning. Some were watching TV upstairs, trying to stay away from the ground floor flat and its direct exposure to the building's entrance; others were keeping away from the place altogether. Anas and Jamal rolled hashish joints and prepared *kif* pipes. Jamal was nicknamed *le grand dragon* (the great dragon) by the Ivoirians, a nickname that he was strongly encouraging and might possibly have initiated himself. But behind his back, they called him *le poisson* (the fish), for his whole upper body (at least) was covered in numerous and regular linear scars, some of them self-inflicted, similar to

[42] Meaning "blacks" or "niggers": I discuss the implications of this term further below in this chapter.

those I had seen on other Moroccans who had served time in prison. He also had stabbing wounds, so that his skin resembled stretched scales. One eye socket was crushed in from a knife fight and with his broken dentition his smile looked like the broken glass used to prevent people from climbing over walls.

Jamal had been in and out of prison many times, including once, I was told by Perez, for murder. I heard many things about him, including that he was born in prison because his mother had killed her husband whilst pregnant. Anas, who said this was true, looked much younger than Jamal. From a different neighbourhood in Rabat, he was living in an adjacent street with his Douar Hajja-born wife and his young daughter. Always well-groomed and rather stylish, Anas worked part time as a waiter in the city centre and also played percussion in a *gnawa* band with other young men from Douar Hajja. One of his most worn T-shirts was of a black stickman on top of a white stickman with 'fuck racism' inscribed below the image. Perez and others called him '*La Fouine'*, on account of his resemblance to the eponymous French rapper. He was a friend of Perez and often hung out with the migrants from *Le Consulat*.

After I left them in the foyer and passed Omar's closed internet café, I met with my Ivoirian informant Mohamoud, sitting at his usual corner amongst shoes and tools, fixing a pair of worn out Moroccan slippers with some glue. In his late thirties, Mohamoud usually wore a merry smile on his round face, but that day he was particularly anxious. Though it was late April and the weather quite warm, if slightly colder in Douar Hajja's narrow alleyways, he was wearing a quilted winter jacket. He said it was meant as a protection from stab wounds, and looked anxiously at the Moroccan youths who were, as usual, hanging out near his shoemaking spot, smoking hashish idly on that busy street rising from the small Douar Hajja market. Amongst them, Mohamoud told me, were some of the youths who had participated in the attack the previous night. I returned to *château* to meet with Konade, Pierre and Aziz from *Le Consulat* who had rung to say they were coming back from hospital and a visit to the UNHCR.

We sat at my regular café where the waiters were always polite and sometimes joked with the sub-Saharan migrants I came with. With the help of my informants, I further pieced together what had happened. The night before, with nothing else to do, some of the sub-Saharans, as well as Moroccan youths further down the street, were

hanging out in their separate groups, chatting outside. Omar, a Moroccan in his thirties whose family migrated to Rabat when he was a child, got annoyed with the sub-Saharans' chatter. Most probably on drugs, he grabbed his machete, came out of his internet café, where sub-Saharans are an important part of the clientele, and picked an argument. Without any specific motive, he picked on Konade, a Malian migrant who was living with the Ivoirians in *Le Consulat,* started screaming and then hacking at Konade's legs with the machete (see Fig. 44). Some panic ensued; most inhabitants of *Le Consulat* quickly dispersed and fled. Konade was held and robbed of his money and mobile phone by some of the loitering Moroccan youths who seized their chance of a quick and easy theft.

Fig. 44 Konade two days after having been attacked.

Pierre, a Cameroonian living on the first floor, was just standing there and got hit too. Ivorian Aziz, who managed the Ivorian foyer on the ground floor and also worked as a shoemaker just outside *Le Consulat*, tried to intervene. Omar got more infuriated and walked ten metres down the alleyway to grab Mohamoud's iron shoemaking tool and used it as an additional weapon. By then all the migrants had run off. Konade was taken in by the Moroccan neighbours who helped tend his wounds and hid him until it was safe to go out again. Ivorian Aziz went back into the house to

prevent people from coming in and robbing them as was often the case during such events. The Moroccan woman selling *melloui* opposite the house warned Aziz not to come out as Omar was still there destroying all his shoe-mending equipment. The shoes deposited by Aziz's customers were being stolen by the very Moroccan youths who chatted with him daily at the same street corner. Then, Jamal prevented Omar from entering, saying 'you can hit blacks outside, but not in my house.' All this happened in the presence of a policeman in uniform, probably going home at the end of his shift, who just stood by looking. Everyone stayed well out of the way of Omar who roamed the neighbourhood with two machetes and the iron tool for most of the evening, looking for Konade.

Pierre summed up the general mood at the end of our conversation: 'it is slavery. For them hitting a black is nothing, it is [their] habit. They think we, blacks, are worth nothing.' In this chapter, I explore the relationships between sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans in Taqaddoum to examine whether everyday life in this marginal neighbourhood was solely punctuated by racism and violence. Firstly, this chapter gives more details about the experiences and expectations of young Moroccans in Taqaddoum – in especially Douar Hajja and Maadid. It then examines discrimination and violent aggression against migrants by contextualising them in the light of racism and institutional violence. Then, drawing on Derrida's concept of hospitality (2000) and Wise's notion of 'hopeful intercultural moments' (2005), this chapter also discusses more 'hopeful' encounters between sub-Saharans and Moroccans. Finally, the issues of unpredictability and limits of solidarity in Taqaddoum are considered.

Mixed, chaabi neighbourhoods

Ali was lying in the shade of a tall eucalyptus opposite the Sofitel hotel. The heat was excruciating on that late August morning, two weeks before I finished fieldwork in 2013. Along the busy road circling the Almohade outer city wall, Moroccan flags, motionless for the lack of wind, were hanging on allocated poles as the King was expected back at his nearby palace. Apart from the occasional roar of a sports car's engine driving out of the up-market hotel, nothing disturbed Ali and other homeless

people taking a nap. Later on, crowds of *Rbatis*, inhabitants of Rabat, would gather to run in the adjacent park before their *ftour*, the meal to break the fast during Ramadan.

Skinny and short, with large brown eyes and dark skin, Ali, whose family originated from southern Morocco, was in his forties. Born in Douar Hajja, he had been sleeping rough for some years after having been disowned by his father. From the beginning, I was amazed by his sense of self-irony. '*Ktr dyal hm kaydhhk* [too many problems make you laugh]' he would repeat. 'I cannot stand TV, you see the King's face on it all the time. I don't have a TV. *Ana bekheer* [I am alright]. I have no TV, I have no house', he told me when we first met, before breaking off in his frantic laughter. It took time to grasp Ali's jokes about being homeless and hungry, as it did to understand sub-Saharans' laughter about police brutality.

Ali enjoyed practising his fluent English with me and recalling trickster stories about his life in Dublin, where as an undocumented migrant for eight years he took the joke name of Mario Cacharel**.** Before absconding on his visa in Ireland, he had obtained a degree in Islamic Studies. Since returning to Morocco, he had developed an interest in freedom of consciousness, repeating that mosques remained shut whilst churches in Ireland supported him when he was homeless. Pointing at Moroccans coming out of Douar Hajja's mosques, he would complain that their Muslim values were only enacted at prayer time, 'outside [the mosque], *safi*, that's it'. I heard similar criticisms from sub-Saharan migrants, which I further explore below. Although apostasy is not formally a crime in Morocco, accusations of proselytization are sometimes used against Moroccans who convert to Christianity. Because of his occasional presence at Rabat's cathedral, Ali ran into trouble with the authorities but he dismissed the interest of the police: 'I go to church, I fast, I believe in the prophet, I believe in Jesus, in Satan. I can have the fucking religion I want.'

Ali and I shared news of Perez, a common Ivoirian friend who had introduced us to one another, and his troubles in the borderlands. We had not seen Perez in a while and joked that he would be back soon, on account of his notorious lack of luck with border-crossing attempts. Ali had a lot of sympathy for sub-Saharan migrants, but he often redirected the conversation towards 'Moroccan' issues: 'they [sub-Saharan migrants] say that in their home countries the police do not do that [arbitrary arrests, deportations etc.] to them. Well, this is my country and they do it to me. They can even

do more than that.' Discussing my research, Ali regularly pressed me 'to spend time with the original people [the Moroccans] from Douar Hajja to understand how they live here.' Many of the issues brought up by Moroccans were indeed strikingly similar to those raised by sub-Saharans. Understanding life for the Moroccan inhabitants of Douar Hajja and Maadid is crucial to exploring the living conditions of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in those marginal neighbourhoods. Hence, before examining relationships with sub-Saharan migrants, Chapter 3 first examines issues discussed by Moroccan youth (e.g. their expectations, hopes and desires), which echo many of the themes explored in the overall thesis when discussing irregular, sub-Saharan migration.

Although associated with poverty, Douar Hajja, Maadid and Taqaddoum host heterogeneous socio-economic categories of Moroccan inhabitants. Taqaddoum is usually deemed wealthier than the two douars. Samia, a young woman in her early twenties from a relatively wealthy family in Taqaddoum – her dad was a prosperous glassmaker —listed diverse employments amongst the people living around her house, from graduate students working as secretaries or in call-centres, men working in the market and nearby shops, women working as cleaners and nannies in wealthier neighbourhoods, to civil servants such as policemen and teachers, as well as some journalists attracted by the lower rents.

Samia complained that Taqaddoum suffered from the reputation of Douar Hajja and Maadid as people 'imagin[ed] the worst comes out of [Taqaddoum]. All over Morocco, it is known as the nastiest neighbourhood in Rabat. I had friend from Tangier who came to Rabat and they knew about Taqaddoum, they had been told not to go there.' Yet, in Maadid, Youssef, and his two closest friends Hassan and Younes exemplify the range of occupations in the two douars. In their early twenties, they were all born in Maadid. Hassan and Youssef's families came from Taza and Oujda. Youness self-identified as a Berber; his family came from Agadir. Youssef's dad used to be a truck-driver but had been jobless for several years. Shortly before I left, he was occasionally working as a chauffeur for a civil servant from a ministry. Youssef's mother, like many women in the neighbourhood, started early in the morning with a bus or *grand taxi* ride from *château* to the wealthier neighbourhoods of Souissi, Agdal and Hay Riad, where she worked as a cleaner for more affluent Moroccan families.

Youssef's family lived in a grungy small flat on the top floor of a three-storey building on a very tortuous alleyway at the bottom of Maadid. Their roof was made of metal sheets, and water often drips through.

Hassan and Youness lived closer to *château*. Hassan's dad was a retired soldier with a 3000dh pension which provided for his family of four boys.[43] In our discussions about economic statuses in the neighbourhood, he would present himself as being in between Youssef and Youness. Youness, whose dad used to work for the royal palace, runs a small chicken shop with his brother off Avenue Houmane al Fatouaki. Along with his wife, daughter and the rest of his family, he lived in a nicely finished, though not lavish, three-storey building. For the majority of men in Maadid, as in Douar Hajja, low-revenue employment in construction and commerce (including many street sellers working without any permits who risk seeing their goods and scales confiscated) were the only tangible alternatives to unemployment. Not far from *château*, Moroccan skilled workers lined up on the market street waiting for painting, plumbing and other manual jobs.

In Maadid and Douar Hajja, a family may occupy a whole building, a floor, or just a single room, with conditions ranging from dilapidated to much more affluent. Some lived in conditions similar to those of the unsanitary and over-crowded houses shared by migrants, sometimes in the same buildings. The mix of poor families from rural Morocco and lower-middle class Moroccans is not surprising since, as Navez puts it, 'illegal settlements have been a way of acceding to property for the middle classes who did not benefit from distributions made by the state' (Navez-Bouchanine 2003:7). As a result of their continued integration within the city, those

[43] To put this in perspective, 3000dh was the monthly allowance Samia was getting from her father when studying in Tangier. In 2013, the medium net wage for civil servants was 7250dh, 4728dh in the private sector (la Vie Eco 28/05/2014). These figures do not account for income from the informal economy in places like Taqaddoum. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that a recurrent complaint I heard in Rabat was that in Morocco people are either rich or poor, there is no middle class. Such assertions might not reflect accurately the economic landscape in Morocco. Drawing on a recent study, Igamane argues for the existence of a stratified middle class in Morocco, characterised by a fear of 'social downgrading' (2013). Indeed, El Rahli (2013) argues that despite the launch of numerous socio-economic programmes in Morocco since 1960 and the global diminution of poverty, inequalities regarding the share of national wealth have not been bridged. For him, the gap between rich and poor has not ceased widening and illustrates a lack of social policies in Morocco.

neighbourhoods have attracted wealthier and better educated households.[44] In Douar Hajja, Ali would point to houses sold by 'original people for a lot of money'.

Maadid and especially Douar Hajja are renowned as hubs for drugs and prostitution. Samia was aware that with her university degree she was more privileged than some of her childhood friends: 'they have small jobs or they prostitute themselves. […] Families know but say nothing because the girls bring money. […] They do not walk about with mini-skirts or make up, they put everything, their "work clothes" they say, in a bag and […] they come back wearing a *djellaba*.' Youssef and Hassan were always quick to add that people were 'not bad inside them, [but] bad because of *dourouf* [life conditions].' As Hassan puts it, 'people living in Taqaddoum, […] they have no time, they need money. […] The dad works, the mother has four or five children to look after, or she works. Because the parents have no money they tell children "you have to work now."'

For the *woulad* Douar Hajja (the children of Douar Hajja) and *woulad* Maadid, their neighbourhoods were *chaabi* (popular, as in the French *populaire*), a term imbued with positive connotations, pointing to the constant bustle in market streets clogged by neighbours and friends chatting outside, cheap living costs for inhabitants said to be generous and unassuming. It was a warm place where people know each other's families and keep an eye on the children who escape from small flats to play in the alleyways.

Lack of opportunities and corruption

Sitting near the Sofitel hotel, Ali was laughing: 'I am sorry Sébastien. You came to visit me in Morocco and I cannot offer you a cup of coffee in my house. I have no house, I am homeless.' He added, 'how are you dealing with fasting? Me, it is forty years I fast. I am fasting from work, housing and human rights here.' A few weeks earlier he had been arrested by the police in Douar Hajja for smoking hashish. The other two people with him were let free after they paid some money. Ali had nothing and spoke out. So, he was taken and beaten up in the police station. He tried to lodge a complaint with the help of a human rights association but did not expect anything:

[44] Recent scholarly works on urbanism in Rabat (see Essahel 2011) have focused on other semi-peripheral shanty towns (e.g. Douar Kora), or remoter illegal neighbourhoods (e.g. in Temara) as marginalized populations and their insalubrious habitats have been pushed further away from Rabat.

‘[abroad], they say that it is going democratic, that there are *droits de l’homme*; it is not going democratic, there is nothing here.’

Ahmed, who had lived fourteen years in the UK, without documents, after having crossed from Tangier and then from Calais as a teenager in the 1990s, often said the same. As we entered a café on Avenue Al Haouz, he pulled a joint from his pocket and then remembered we were not in a shack in Douar Hajja. He went out to buy two cigarettes, some *marquises*, the cheap brand most people smoke in Morocco. He started as soon as he sat down: ‘they say “human rights, democracy, go to vote”, but it’s all bullshit. Here there is a King, he decides what happens. That’s his country. People do as he says. They kiss his hands, [quickly looking around him], they kiss his fucking balls, man.’

Similarly to Ali talking about how drug dealers in Douar Hajja need to pay policemen for protection, Ahmed complained that Morocco ‘is corrupt all the way from the small guy to the top.’ When I met him, Ahmed had stopped working in a security company for 1300dh a month, and for twelve hours a day, despite the contract stipulating the pay was 3000dh a month. ‘Here I have nothing. I don’t have an uncle looking over my shoulder,’ he said. Like Ahmed and Ali, Hassan constantly referred to the need for *piston* (pulling strings) in Morocco to secure a job. Hassan had a diploma in accountancy but could not find a job because he could not pay to obtain one. He left for Marrakesh to join the *gendarmerie* school where he was also warned he would have to bribe an officer to expect swifter promotion.

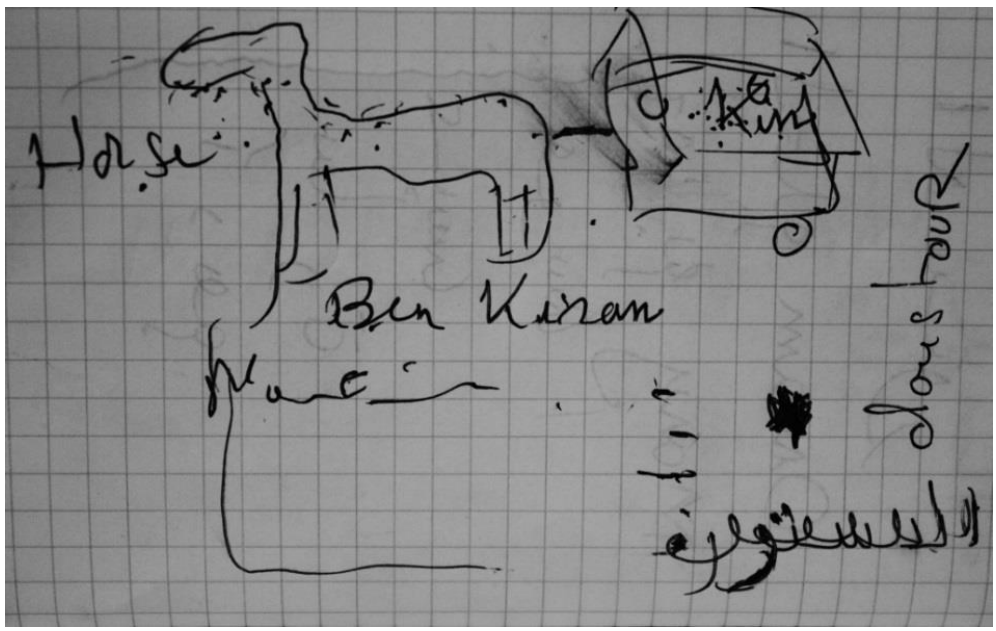

Fig. 45 Ali's drawing of the King as a wagon and the prime minister as a horse: 'in Moroccan politics, the more it changes the more it is the same thing'.

Ahmed protested that notwithstanding Morocco's sufficient resources to feed all, politicians 'do nothing for this country, people starve, people cannot get treated in hospital. If you need an operation, you have to buy the needle, the thread and the cotton yourself.' For him, there are no avenues to complain about the government doing nothing: 'if I go into the city centre to claim my human rights, I would get beaten up with baseball bats, they would send the army. They send these uneducated people from the countryside to beat demonstrators in front of the parliament.'

Ali often directly pointed to the King for the lack of freedoms in Morocco (Fig. 45). He had countless jokes about this. 'Do you know the joke about the man who gets drunk and goes out on the street?' he once asked me, 'he shouts "death to the King, he is a scumbag." His mother comes running out, telling people, "Spanish king, Spanish king."' Translating a news headline for me, Ali commented, '"The King is winning for Morocco". He is winning for himself. Excuse me, he should be winning for us, he does not know what it is like to sleep rough.' He always complained that people prefer to watch football rather than talk politics. Pretending to be talking to the people around us in a café, he shouted: 'I am very happy Barcelona and Real Madrid are out of the football games. "There is something called Arab Spring. Go straight for the King now", I tell people.'

Ali was trying to approach members of *Le Mouvement du 20 Février* (also known as Feb20), a movement which has sought significant constitutional reforms in Morocco since the 'Arab Spring'. Despite constitutional changes, quickly announced by the King in 2011, many Moroccans continue to protest and demand significant reforms. According to a founding member of Feb20, 'what the state has given us with the right hand, it has taken back with the left' (quoted in Rachidi 2015). Protests have been heavily repressed: in 2013, a Human Rights Watch report (HRW 2013) caused public outcry by pointing to the use of torture to secure confessions.

Kausch argues that, although Morocco became the first country to obtain 'advanced status' in its relationship with the EU in October 2008, genuine democratic reforms and the advancement of human rights is no longer on the European agenda in the face of 'the prioritization of regional stability against the background of

transnational terrorism, illegal migration and an escalating Arab–Israeli conflict' (2009: 166). Although Article 1 of the 1996 Constitution declares Morocco to be 'a democratic, social and constitutional monarchy', Storm (2009) notes that of the three core principles of democracy she identifies (free and fair elections; basic civil liberties; independent government), Morocco only satisfactorily fulfils the first.[45] Thus Kausch asserts that the distribution of power is better described as an '"executive monarchy". […] The powers are distinguished in law and discourse, but in practice there is neither separation nor balance of powers, with the palace-led executive exerting leading influence over the legislature and judiciary' (2009: 168).

Scholars argue that during the period of reforms that started towards the end of the rule of Hassan II (1961-1999) and has continued with the reign of his son Mohammed VI (1999-to date) the most striking feature has been the flexibility of the Alawite monarchy, incarnated by the King as 'Commander of the faithful' (*amir al-muminin*), which has maintained a consistency of purpose whilst adapting to changing domestic and external circumstances.[46] Despite a series of reforms (e.g. Family code, political participation), 'the Makhzen [royal palace] have ensured that any reform programme implemented carefully preserves the essential prerogatives of the monarchy whilst instituting as much of the external form of the reform programmes as possible' (Willis 2009: 234).

According to Linn, Morocco faces an important socio-political crisis 'as a result of dismal economic growth, extreme inequality, and a lack of trust in government resulting from extensive corruption and the perceived impotency of political actors' (2011: 14). Indeed, as Rohan puts it, in contrast with 'the myth of Moroccan exceptionalism, used to explain the country's relative stability in 2011 and 2012, the gradually mounting discontent in the kingdom is in response to the same fundamental forces at work worldwide—the rift between the poor and elite, political inefficacy, and mismanagement of scarce resources' (2014). For Ben-Layashi, 'more and more in recent years, the state has found itself incapable of fulfilling even its basic social roles in the area of welfare, employment, education and health services' (2012: 148).

[45] The 2001 constitution contains the additional adjective 'parliamentary' in the first article.
[46] See especially the analyses by Daadaoui (2010), Liddlell (2010), Linn (2011), Vermeren (2009) as well as the *Mediterranean Politics* special issue edited by Maghraoui (2009).

Ali and Ahmed always contrasted Morocco with Europe, and dreamt of equal opportunities and a genuine welfare state. When I met him, Youssef was sitting his baccalaureate exams for the third time. Though he passed, he failed to achieve his dream of getting into the sports school and becoming a gym instructor. His grades suffered because he had to help his family, working during the weekends, holidays, and sometimes after school. As he often pointed out, 'people from private schools, they study more than us and then we pass the same exams.' *Woulad* Maadid and Douar Hajja did not start with the same life chances as children from wealthier families in nearby Souissi or Agdal. The lack of opportunities sometimes translated into spatial confinement. To some extent, like for the sub-Saharan migrants, there was an invisible barrier around Douar Hajja and Taqaddoum for some of the Moroccan inhabitants. Ali complained that upon finding out where he is from, police in Agdal tell him to 'fuck off back to Douar Hajja and not come back again'.

The 'bad path': destiny and Taqaddoum as a prison

Shortly before *ftour,* Ali and I left the park to spend time by a crossroad Ali has nicknamed '*Bab* [door] Douar Hajja' in the market. Sat on a concrete slab, we watched people rushing to buy food before returning home. Next to us was a *melloui* stall where customers were queuing to buy flat-bread but also small bags of *nfh* (a type of drug to sniff). Ali gave me a crash course on drugs and prices available in Douar Hajja, stressing that it was renowned as a 'platform for *qarqoubi,* tablets'. He pointed at some men working at the stalls and told me why they had been arrested and how long they had spent in prison. He joked that in Douar Hajja, prison was called *El Hajj* (the pilgrimage). A man selling fruits and vegetables opposite us used to go to Fez to steal where he was not known. 'He gave me one advice: "stay away from aggression"', Ali laughed.

As it was time for the *Maghreb* prayer, we went deeper into Douar Hajja where Ali would get his *ftour* from charitable people he knew. He always ate there during Ramadan 'to shame' his parents who lived nearby. When the *takbir* marking the start of the prayer resonated, Ali broke his fast and youths sitting nearby lit their first joints before eating anything. A few minutes later, a woman in her *djellaba* was trotting down the street, talking on the phone: 'Have you had your *ftour* yet? Yes, yes, I am

having my *ftour* right now. Yes, I am home.' She smiled at Ali who translated what she said next: 'It is months you are in prison and then you ask me if I am having my *ftour*.' Ali laughed, 'She is right, if he is jealous, he should just not have fucking gone to prison and stayed with his wife.'

Ali often despaired about the lack of opportunities for youth in his neighbourhood: 'people from Douar Hajja, they are just surviving, really. It is a hard life. Nowhere to go, no money for hash, problems with the police, it is always the same routine.' Youths are 'seen as scumbags'; having few prospects, many become addicted to drugs and alcohol, living on ten dirhams a day.[47] Coming back from Ivoirian Charlie's hairdressing salon in Douar Hajja with my flatmate Stéphane, a young Moroccan student smoking hashish stopped us. Pointing to his joint and alluding to the government, he said in fluent French: 'they just leave us enough of this so we stay still.' Taking drugs and getting high was a straightforward form of escapism. Like some of my sub-Saharan informants who took up to 'smoking [their] problems', Ahmed explained: 'I really want to work. But there is nothing to do. I prefer to get high from realities.' Sitting at a café in Douar Hajja, Moroccan Anas pointed at the wall in front of us whilst smoking a joint, and said: 'we smoke because we want a different view than this one. We smoke because when we do, everything becomes funny. You see this man who's just walked past? He is normal. When I smoke, he becomes funny. Everything becomes funny. When we smoke, we are on *zahara* [Venus].'

'When you have nothing', Ali would continue, 'you start looking for *aggressions* [assaults]. [People] have no money for their drugs. They attack people, they go to prison'. Going to prison, for whatever reason, means getting a police record which further reduces opportunities to stay away from petty crimes and drugs. Even getting menial jobs in construction could prove difficult and, as in Ali's case, families could disavow you: 'Prisoners, when they come out, even their families look at them like they are going to steal their *butagaz* [gas bottle]. But for fuck sake give them a chance.' Youssef called this chain of events 'the bad path' – following the 'bad

[47] 1 GBP equalled roughly 13.5 Moroccan dirham.

boys'.[48] The good path was to work hard to help your parents and fund your own schooling and find activities other than hanging out and smoking. Youssef kept busy working or training in the gym as an amateur bodybuilder to stay away from 'bad boys'.

Ali introduced me to fifteen-year-old Mohamed at a games room in Douar Hajja, on the windowless ground floor of a three-storey building with a pool table and some rusty electronic games, run by Hicham. Ali explained that Hicham, who had been to prison for something he did not commit, was trying to keep Mohamed close and safe after he was caught selling hashish with other youths and went to prison for a month. Mohamed, whose face was also scarred from a knife-fight, begged Ali to help him find a job so he would not go back to prison and disappoint his mother. Ali was sorry since people would keep looking at someone with a scar 'like a fucking prisoner. You will go back to jail. There are no solutions here. They say they spend 70dh on each prisoner a day, […] excuse me, give me the 70dh a day and you never see me anymore in a bad place where you can arrest me [laughter].'

For youth in the two douars, 'street culture offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity' in defiance of economic marginalization (Bourgeois 2008: 8). But like on the street of El Barrio, this response to structural exclusion is self-destructive. Ali explained that in Douar Hajja children see their older siblings struggling to get qualifications or finding jobs. People like Mohamed cannot read because they left school early: 'when you have gone to university and you have no job, like me, you can go crazy. […] People don't want to go to go to school, we cannot get anything here, it is a country of hashish and criminals, that's it.' Although Ali has a degree, he had no steady work but occasionally did some casual gardening jobs, being paid 80dh a day like sub-Saharans migrants.

Marginalized Moroccans, like sub-Saharan migrants, call Taqaddoum a 'prison [*abs*] with an open roof-top.' High from *maajoun* in a café, Ali shouted 'the prison in Morocco is civil, it is outside, this is the fucking prison.' Then, lowering his voice as people stared at us, he added, 'it's like a war. I think I will go to paradise *inshallah*, because here is already hell. Excuse me, but I cannot get two hells, what do you mean?

[48] When I first met Youssouf, he was part of a small theatre group with Moroccans and sub-Saharans. Acting in English, he played the role of 'bad boy', a young man led astray by a drug dealer who starts taking drugs and gets killed. He greatly enjoyed playing that part, pretending to smoke and drink.

[Laughter].' He usually spent his mornings at a café, drinking coffee and reading papers paid for by friends. He would rant about politics to whoever wanted to listen, but, he said, 'in the afternoon, I sit and I smoke *maajoun*, it makes me laugh. I have to give a rest to my mind or I speak and think too much and I go crazy.' Moroccans, like my sub-Saharan informants (see Chapter 5), talked of remaining 'strong' so as not to explode and become mad. Mustapha called Douar Hajja '*Doula qnila*' (country of bomb).[49] Youssef half-shamefully confessed to me that faced with all sorts of obstacles and problems when growing up in Taqaddoum, 'you have to be strong. […] You have to keep everything in here [points to his heart]. It is not good. One day it might explode and you will do something crazy, steal, kill someone, go to jail, and then it is over.'

Youssef repeated to me that people trying to escape the poverty and limitation of their parents' lives would, through bad choices, reach the same dead end: 'you did not want to end up like your parents. But in the end your thinking brought you there.' Talking about difficulties in growing up in Maadid, he explained that the two main issues were poverty (*fqr*) and education (*talim*), as in under-development (*tkhlouf*) and ignorance (*jhl*): 'when these two meet together, people become blind.' However, he added that 'if you have desire [*rghbh*, or also translated as willingness], these two things do not make you give up. It is impossible if you have desire.' Echoing many discussions I had in Douar Hajja with sub-Saharan migrants about 'chance' and God giving to those who demonstrate good moral behaviour (see Chapter 5), Youssef believed doing good would be rewarded: 'you need to take the good path and never give up. God will help you if he sees you doing the good things. If you have a good mentality, *inshallah*, *allah ysaehl* [God willing, God helping].'

I was reminded of a graffiti in *L'Embassade* (See Chapter 7) reading 'suffering is a school of life', when Hassan commented on poverty: 'for the majority here, Taqaddoum *aziz alik* [is dear to you]. You have had experiences, you grew up there. People who have grown up in poverty, with obstacles, problems, when they reach their goal, they have a strong personality.' It was better, he claimed, to be born poorer and learn through hardship: 'here we have no *flous* [money], if our shoes are broken, we have to repair them, not throw them away. When you become rich, you will know a

[49] As Moroccan media often pointed out, the perpetrators of the 2003 and 2007 bombings in Casablanca originated from a shantytown. This had an impact on Morocco's *Villes Sans Bidonvilles* (Cities without shantytowns) program launched in 2004.

lot, you will have become strong.' Ali also called Douar Hajja 'a good school, not like Medina.' Describing Taqaddoum as a place of hardship and learning (along with hope) was a facet of its depiction as a *hay chaabi* (*quartier populaire*). Hassan continued, 'each person has a story. […] He has seen a lot, he looks older than he is, but despite all of this, they are happy, they say *bekheer* [alright]. People laugh. They sleep and say that tomorrow will be better than today, so we hope.' Whilst Hassan often added that 'poor people are hospitable', Ali was more cynical, saying that one could spare a cigarette and a chat, but generosity stopped there. As for the sub-Saharans living in hardship, solidarity existed but was not limitless (See Chapter 7). Nevertheless, Ali was getting food, coffee and drugs, as well as his clothes washed from people he knew. In Douar Hajja and Maadid, Moroccan inhabitants were part of important networks of solidarity, such as the collective loans schemes without recourse to a bank (e.g. *daret*, or *Tontine* in French) used by Youssouf's family.

Imagining *bgha*

Leaning against a concrete wall in Maadid, a Moroccan teenager blew a big cloud of hashish smoke in my face. 'When I smoke this, I am not here anymore, I am in Miami', he said looking upwards and grinning. However much Youssef told me he loved the place, he was aspiring to get a job and a house outside Taqaddoum, even just in nearby Hay Nadha. Moroccan youths' gaze was directed towards the other side of the Mediterranean. One solution was to *hrag*, to 'burn the border' and irregularly cross to Europe.[50]

Hassan explained to me that in Douar Hajja poor Moroccans and 'African migrants' had the same need for money and the same 'objective', a word often used by my sub-Saharan informants (see Chapter 4): 'the two think of *bgha* [outside], to emigrate and have money. Moroccans look for work and do not find anything. Their first idea is to migrate to Europe.' Hassan told me about youth's 'imagination about Europe, for them it means: work market, money and everything which goes well. Everything which is missing in Morocco can be found in Europe […]. Those without money or contacts need to go the illegal way. For people, *bgha* means better education,

[50] As noted by Abderrezak, from the Arabic word *hrag* for 'burning' (e.g. documents, or more figuratively, borders), 'Harraga (''burners'') is the neologism used in the Maghreb and by French media to refer to individuals who emigrate clandestinely' (2009: 463; see also Pandolfo 2007).

culture, work, development.' Europe is a place without 'piston'. For Hassan, not taking the 'bad path' of criminal activities is difficult unless you are born 'rich', but 'in *bgha* if you work, *darouree* [inevitably] you will become a rich man. […] In *bgha* […] if you have the will, you will succeed.' As Youssef put it to me, 'we have all *mouhiba* [a talent], all people have this. But in this country you cannot develop it or find help to show others this talent.'

Fig. 46 'Europe is yours' advert in a magazine used to wrap up grilled almonds by a *Moul zaraaya* in Douar Hajja.

Similarly to migrants talking about leaving (*dehors* – outside) to look for their lives (*chercher sa vie*), Ali explained: '*bgha hewa Europa* [Outside, that is, Europe].

We say I am going to *bgha* I am going to look after myself. We say to go to *bgha* to look after my future, to get my life, to become rich. Here people want to *hrag*, it gives them hope.' Moroccan youth often hailed me on the street, jokingly asking me for papers to go to Spain. My Cameroonian friend Picas was always making jokes about Moroccan girls looking at me because they 'just want[ed] [my] *bordeau*.' [51] When walking down the alleyway where both Lamine and Youssouf lived, I could hear '*zouaj maaya'* (marry me) being hollered and giggles from a few windows. Some young women I spoke to wanted to get out, because they needed medical care and had no money, because they strived for equality or for better education and job opportunities. For instance, Samia who claimed that Morocco had a 'foreign-degree complex' was trying to get a PhD scholarship in Australia because having one, she believed, would increase her chances of getting a job in Morocco or abroad. For others without money, it meant crossing the sea like Ahmed, or absconding on a short visa like Ali.

Khosravi notes how amongst Iranians the term *Khrarej* (meaning 'outside', or 'abroad') refers mostly to the West and has connotations of higher education. According to him, 'referring solely to the wealthy and modern west, *kharej* [implies] high quality and standard. Like the consumption of *kharej* goods, ideas of *kharej* are mobilized in the discourse on success, progress, wealth, health, aesthetics and even sexuality' (2010: 87). Many Moroccans and migrants shared such an imaginary repertoire and hopeful aspirations embedded in this imaginary outside (Fig. 46). As Elliot puts it, in Morocco, migration to Europe has affected not only the GDP but 'also the very way in which existence, future and possibility are spoken about and understood' (2015: 1; see also McMurray: 2001).

However, Ali and Ahmed, who both specified that they had returned voluntarily, were more tempered in their description of Europe. Ali had endured hardship, and was dismissive of equating *bgha* with paradise: 'it makes people live in a dream (*Houlm*) not reality (*Hqyqa*). Some think you can just go to Paris and find money behind the cafes and bring it back. They say I am stupid, I was in Europe eight years and I did not learn how to make money', he would laugh. Ali often pointed to migrants back from Europe on holiday who incite youths to leave by showing off their wealth: 'migrants

[51] Colour of European passport.

here give fake stories. They come with a car, but maybe that is all they have, they have hardly anything to eat. Maybe he has to go back to work right away because he might be losing his job.' Ahmed too could not dissuade youths from aspiring to go to Europe: 'they say "why did you go there if it is so hard?" I tell them to fucking go see themselves, you know what I mean?'

Yet, Ali described *bgha* as a solution to inequality and lack of freedom, and opposed it to *hougra* (oppression): 'if you stay here, you go to prison. Here, it is *hougra*, but if you go *bgha*, you can have your *droits de l'homme*, you get respect. Here, you cannot get respect.' He would often tell me that in Europe, one could save money towards a house but in Douar Hajja one could work forty years and get nothing. 'Being illegal there is better than being legal here. Here you are legal only in your pocket', Ali often joked, 'in Morocco we might have nice food and lovely weather as they say, but we are like strangers in our own country. That is why we run away.'

Though many youths I met talked about Europe, few had attempted the crossing. For Ali, '*bgha* is not like years ago, there is no money like before [in Europe]. People do not go *hrag* like before. People come back and say there is no work, and tell families it is hard. People in Tanger, in Casablanca, they have a harbour they think more about going.' When the nearby industrial zone was more active, he said, youths would get on trucks going to Europe: 'it was a chance for us [to get to Europe] but they have even fucked the industrial zone now.' Youssef often said that people of his generation were 'cleverer. They study more and look for people who could help them. Or they marry a foreigner.'

The similarities between the experiences, desires and expectations of sub-Saharans and Moroccans having to cope with immobility, uncertainty and illegality in Taqaddoum were striking. Yet, tensions were rife. In the remainder of Chapter 3, I return to the violent episode at *Le Consulat* mentioned in the introductory ethnographic vignette to examine in more details the relationships between the irregular, sub-Saharan migrants and the disfranchised Moroccans who sometimes lived in the same buildings – the 'illegal habitats' of Maadid and Douar Hajja.

Everyday violence

Episodes such as the one described in the introduction to this chapter were part of daily conversations for sub-Saharans in Maadid and, especially, Douar Hajja.[52] My informants constantly complained about being subjected to acts of violence (particularly in the *couloirs*, at night or in the early morning before looking for work), and especially of being mugged at knife point. In ghettoes, conversations routinely revolved around episodes of violence and difficulties in getting treatment for wounds sustained in Taqaddoum and the borderlands (Fig. 47). Migrants, whether they could afford to pay or not, were regularly turned away at the hospital, even when their critical conditions required emergency treatment.

Fig. 47 Cameroonian migrant returning from an unsuccessful 'attack' on Melilla's fence.

The prospect of being assaulted added further strain onto the migrants' mobility, already inhibited by their legal status. Patrick, a Central-African man in his forties who lived alone near *L'Embassade*, described to me how (on his way to work early one morning) a Moroccan walking past him pulled up his t-shirt, exhibited a large knife, and attempted to mug him. After that event, Patrick became much more

[52] Moving out of the Takaqaddoum area altogether was often not possible for lack of resources, but many of my informants had purposefully moved from Douar Hajja to Maadid, which is deemed less dangerous.

cautious and was reluctant to walk about with me further in Douar Hajja, even in the afternoon.

Yet, staying indoors was not adequate protection against assault. Malian Abderhamid was bedridden after he got several bones broken when beaten up by the Moroccan police outside the enclave of *Ceuta*. In the Malian ghetto where he was staying and being looked after by his 'brothers', he reported the words of a renowned drug-dealer living next door: 'he told people not to assault the blacks in his neighbourhood because he was living here too and he did not want to attract the attention of the police. But his friends were attacking us.' Abderhamid explained how 'at night, if you went out to get some fresh air or listen to music, they would attack you. You could not even go to the shop.' It was not just outside which was unsafe; Abderhamid added that '*clochards* [tramps] used to come and enter the house with machetes. If they saw someone alone they would attack him. Once one came in but there were three Malians. He got scared and pretended he had entered to sell an MP3 player.'

Yet, some Moroccans and migrants in Douar Hajja told me that the place had improved and the police had arrested 'many thieves and drug dealers' in the neighbourhood. As a result, the place, though still dangerous, was sometimes said to be relatively safer. Abderhamid himself explained that the police once arrived in great numbers but told the migrants not to worry or run since this time they had 'come to arrest the drug dealers.' The drug-dealer living next door was arrested with his family: 'now we can rest, there are fewer aggressions here. We can go out and chat on the street until midnight. There are still *clochards* but it is not like before. Before they would not even hide their machetes when walking.'

The French derogatory term *clochard* was widely used by both sub-Saharan migrants and the Moroccan inhabitants. Indeed, when discussing violence against migrants, Moroccans would often underplay the issue by pointing out that *clochards*, usually described as poor, violent drug-addicts, targeted everyone and not just sub-Saharans. For instance, Youssef had been mugged several times in the neighbourhood and he and his friends also exercised caution when walking at night.

Tensions and racism

My Moroccan informant Hassan would often deny that there were any issues, racism or tensions between Moroccans and migrants, stressing that 'Moroccans here have no problem with Africans. It is the government in Morocco which signs conventions with Europe to tell [migrants] they have to go […]. If a policeman comes over here and asks if there are Africans around, the Moroccan will say "no".' Although Hassan would insist that between Burkinabe Lamine and himself 'everything is fine', he eventually admitted there were tensions between migrants and Moroccans. For instance, Moroccan inhabitants were resentful of a perceived rise in the rental market, which they blamed on migrants. Anas explained that 'people [in Douar Hajja] say that since [migrants] have arrived, food is more expensive and prices are higher.' For instance, he pointed out that a two-bedroom with living room apartment would cost around 1000 to 1500dh to rent but that landlords knew they could host as many as forty people in such a space and charge 100dh each, a larger sum difficult to compete with for small earners with a family. Migrants were also accused of driving down wages for Moroccans and stealing jobs, although Ali would often joke that 'they don't take mine, I don't have any.' On the street of Marmiton's restaurant in Douar Hajja, a Malian started sweeping and cleaning the streets and received money from Moroccan neighbours. This sparked some issues with an older Moroccan who had been performing this task for some time already.

However, as Law has it, 'general denials of racism by Moroccans are in stark contrast to the claims, experiences and perceptions of sub-Saharan migrant communities themselves' (2014: 65). Migrants felt they were being swindled. As illustrated in Chapter 2, they complained about paying high prices for their rent and other living costs. As further explored in Chapter 6, they also complained of not being paid properly by employers. Furthermore, they resented being discriminated against on a daily basis. For instance, they were tired of having to debunk stereotypes about Sub-Saharan Africa regarding under-development, ethnic violence and poverty. Exasperated, Eric William often answered, 'yes there are no cars where I am from, we have no cities, we all live in the bush.'

During one of my first visits to *L'Embassade*, a middle aged Moroccan man attempted to break the front door with a machete following an argument with some

inhabitants of the ghetto. The young Cameroonians felt none of my apprehension and leaned over the terrace to encourage him: 'break that door grand-dad!' One shook his head and sighed, pointing to the Moroccan man, 'he is even black like us.' As illustrated by the introductory vignette, sub-Saharan migrants often framed the discriminations they were subjected to in terms of racism, often making references to slavery. My Moroccan informants, however, repeatedly denied there was any racism against migrants. Yet, as Grillo (2005) points out in his study of the protests against the planning of an induction centre for asylum-seekers in an English suburb, it is sometimes difficult to assess whether such denials are simply obfuscations or genuine concerns for the welfare of the neighbourhood. As described by Solomos and Black, 'the logic of racism needs to be appraised in what we shall call *metonymic elaborations*. This means that racisms may be expressed through a variety of coded signifiers' (1994: 156). For instance, Grillo describes how 'protesters, publicly, stressed their concern about the practical implications for social and economic resources in their locality and strenuously denied that their objections were in any way racist, or indeed culturalist' (Grillo 2005: 238). In Taqaddoum, Moroccans often expressed concerns about the welfare of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. However, 'fears of falling house prices might well be genuine, but it is the supposed nature of the incomers which generates that fear in the first place' (Grillo 2005: 257).

While taking me to Taqaddoum, a taxi driver warned me about 'Africans' being dangerous: 'They do drug-dealing and counterfeit documents. If a Moroccan wants to emigrate illegally, he can get from them everything he needs.' He singled out Cameroonians and Nigerians as 'very *yekeyeke* [dodgy, cunning] and *khtr* [dangerous]' whilst declaring that 'Malians and Ivorians are alright.' This hierarchisation of migrants' nationalities, in terms of the perceived dangerousness for the moral and physical wellbeing of Taqaddoum and its Moroccan inhabitants, was very common. Although they obviously varied, Nigerians, who generally spoke no French or Arabic, were often described as the most violent and dangerous by Moroccans. Sub-Saharans also complained of being discriminated against on the basis of their religion. Many of my Christian informants used Muslim names to look for work, or even to interact with Moroccan neighbours and shopkeepers on a daily basis. Yet, Muslim sub-Saharans also denounced racism in mosques.

Lamine and I went to get a fried-sardine sandwich at Soufiane's stall near *château*. Moroccan Soufiane started teasing Lamine, asking if he was Muslim and testing him on his knowledge of the Quran. Lamine, whose dad was an imam, is fluent in classical Arabic and he easily passed the mock test. Then, Lamine, alluding to the Muslim concept of *sadaqah*, charity, smilingly asked Soufiane to put some extra food in his sandwich because he was *muskin* [poor]. Soufiane acquiesced, but joked about Lamine in fact being a rich man. Chatting with me about sub-Saharans in the neighbourhood, Soufiane reflected that Muslim migrants were good as opposed to Ivoirians. I retorted that most Ivoirians I knew in Taqaddoum *were* Muslim. Puzzled, he added, 'well, Ivoirians are alright.'

I saw people pinching their noses in the presence of sub-Saharans, or spiting at them. Overcoming initial embarrassment, Youssef explained some Moroccans in Maadid claimed sub-Saharans smelled, neither washing their bodies nor their clothes. Some thought all sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco were involved in witchcraft. Eric William recalled a rumour circulating in Taqaddoum: 'blacks are cannibals and they ate a housewife who disappeared in the neighbourhood. Even babies.' We joked that she had probably fled to Spain with her Cameroonian lover. A wig and a handbag, mysteriously found hanging in *L'Embassade* (Fig. 48) one morning, became the centre of many jokes on cannibal migrants living there.

Fig. 48 Wig and handbag in *L'Embassade*.

After recalling to me his complex marital arrangements with one wife in Fez and the other in Rabat, a taxi driver on the way to *château* joked that his marital problems would be solved by also wedding 'a black [*azzia*] wife, a Senegalese. There are many of them in Douar Hajja.' With a serious face, he explained they all had the 'illness' which, when I probed, he clarified as 'AIDS, all of them do.' This assertion exemplifies the three commonly perceived fears about sub-Saharan migrants: 'a health danger, because of the image of "Black African" as HIV/AIDS carriers;[53] a security danger because of their illegal status, associated with the drug trade and terrorism; and finally, a social danger, causing increases in crime rates and encouraging violence in Moroccan communities' (Law 2014: 66).

Another tenacious myth was that women were licentious. Ange, from Ivory Coast, often complained of getting sexually harassed by Moroccan men on the street and on buses. For my male sub-Saharan informants, interactions with Moroccan women were a source of resentment, since Moroccan men, even bystanders, threatened to stab them if they merely glanced at Moroccan women. Yet, some migrants had relationships with Moroccan women, often on the internet. Guinean Mohamed, who lived in the room next to Lamine's, started an online relationship with a Moroccan woman who came to visit him. However, they stopped meeting in Douar Hajja because an elder Moroccan woman living in the same building started abusing the woman for seeing a sub-Saharan man.

Sub-Saharan migrants complained about the ways Moroccans addressed them on a daily basis. Some resented being hailed as '*camarade'* (comrade), especially by their Moroccan bosses, although other sub-Saharan informants used it with friends and roommates. The term '*mon ami*' (my friend) was unanimously resented. It was often used in a scornful or contemptuous manner and for some Moroccans it even became a noun in itself (pronounced '*mounami'*), synonymous with 'black person'. When asked, Youssef brushed it off saying that Moroccans call each other *sahabee* (my friend) and use the French word when addressing sub-Saharans. In Taqaddoum, young Moroccans usually called other Moroccans they knew "*sahabee"* or "*khouya"* (my brother). When

[53] In 2013, during the Ebola outbreak, 'Ebola' became a recurrent derogatory nickname for sub-Saharan migrants.

they addressed people they did not know from the same age group, they usually used 'brother' and not 'friend'.

The worst designation for sub-Saharan migrants was '*azzi'*, meaning 'black' or 'nigger'. According to Escoffier, '*azzi'* comes from '*azzaen'*, a substantive of the verb '*azaa',* which, in the passive form, signifies the one who is comforted or consoled. The one needing comfort, consolation, or protection is the one with black skin. Noting that this term was already employed in the 19th century to designate black slaves in the service of the sultan, Escoffier argues that this term suggests a relationship of servitude and dependence (2008: 103). My informants had countless stories of being discriminated against by Moroccans, and called *azzi*.

My friend Najia whose family was from southern Morocco remembered this hurtful expression from her childhood in Salé, pointing out that black in Moroccan Arabic is *Khl* and that *azzi* is a much more derogative term. However, for Ali, *azzi* was not offensive. He often repeated to me that his mother used to call his dad *azzi* , which simply meant black; the word nigger, he explained, was '*negro'* in Darija. He was not the only dark-skinned Moroccan who told me there was no problem with the word *azzi*. Yet, many others disagreed because of the complex usage of this word in Morocco. For instance, twice in my presence, a black Moroccan from the Souss region who worked as a shopkeeper got involved in verbal fights with other Moroccans. They would shout abuse at him, and calling him *azzi* was one of the recurrent designations used. Law points to the contested usage of terms such as *azzi* when he notes that it can be used in a 'humorous' way by black Moroccans but holds 'a derogative and condescending connotation' (Law 2014: 65).

Ivoirian Mohamoud, working on the street as a shoemaker, was particularly exposed to racism. He explained that a customer on the street once shouted that he should fetch something for him. Mohamoud refused and the man grabbed him by the neck shouting, 'you are black, where I tell you to go, you go. You do as I tell you.' A few days later, the same man returned with similar demands, but Mohamoud, was on the phone to his parents, and could not comply. Grabbed by the collar and subjected to the same abuse, Mohamoud left his equipment and fled, since the man called on one of his acquaintances standing nearby with a knife.

Discrimination against black sub-Saharan migrants was pervasive in state practices, media discourses and everyday life in marginal neighbourhoods such as Taqaddoum. As Grillo has it, 'there is historical baggage, and discourse must be understood against the background of that baggage' (2005: 257). El Hamel notes that 'Morocco has traditionally been described in local historiography as a racially and ethnically homogenous nation, defined religiously by Islamic doctrine and linguistically and politically by Arabic nationalism' (2013: 2). However, such revisionist readings obscure the processes of cultural borrowing, creolisation as well as violence and enslavement by depicting Morocco as a country historically free of slavery and social issues associated with its aftermath. Hence, El Hamel asserts that seventeenth-century Morocco provided the context for a division of society by skin colour and then race. Under the rule of Sultan Mawlay Isma'il (born 1672-1727), 'the words *labd* (slave), *aswad* (black), and *haratin* became fused' (2002: 47-48).[54]

According to El Hamel,

> blacks in Morocco have been marginalized for centuries, with the dominant Moroccan culture defining this marginalized group as *'Abid* (plural of *'Abd*), 'slaves'; *Haratin* (plural of *Hartani*, a problematic term that generally meant free black people and/or formerly enslaved black persons); *Sudan* (plural of *Aswad*), 'black Africans'; *Gnawa* (plural of *Gnawi*), 'black West Africans'; *Drawa* (plural *Drawi*), 'blacks from the Draa region', used in a pejorative way; *Sahrawa* (plural of *Sahrawi*), 'blacks from the Saharan region'; and other terms with reference to the fact that they are black and/or descendants of slaves (2013: 4-5).

As noted by Wright, Morocco was 'the largest single market for imported black slaves in the Arab Maghrib' (2002: 55). In modern terms, slaves were purchased or raided from as far afield as 'the southern Sudan Republic, the Central African Republic, mid-Nigeria, and the countries around the headwaters of the Rivers Niger and Senegal: Guinea, western Mali and the Republic of Senegal itself' (Wright 2002: 54). The slave trade began to dwindle in the 1840s across the Sahara but continued to flourish in Morocco. Even after the French protectorate outlawed this practice in 1912, the slave

[54] From the Berber word *ahardan* ('dark colour'); although used to mean freed slaves, historically, '*haratins* were not freed slaves and their descendants but, rather, were free from the beginning, [they] were the descendants of the black people who inhabited the Dra valley' (El Hamel 2002: 39). Berber tribes, pushed southward by advancing Romans, placed indigenous blacks in the oases of Dra in a subordinate position.

trade continued in uncontrolled areas of Morocco until their colonisation in 1932 (Becker 2002: 98).

Whilst scholars such as El Hamel have focused on the history of race and slavery, others have focused on complex relations in (especially southern) contemporary Morocco. For instance, Silverstein argues that in south eastern Morocco, oasis communities have become the *loci* of racialized struggles over land tenure and political influence since independence in 1956 because of the social mobility acquired by black Moroccans (Silverstein 2011: 79). Meanwhile, issues of racism and race relations in Morocco are hardly discussed or addressed. A suggestion by members of parliament in 2013 to outlaw racism still has not been followed by any concrete measures.

Migrants resented being called 'African' by Moroccans. They would often snigger, 'Who do they think they are? White Europeans?' An opinion piece in Moroccan magazine Tel Quel (25-01-2013) illustrates some contradictions in Moroccan society: '[Moroccans] simultaneously are and are not [Africans].' The issue of self-identification for Moroccans as Africans or Arabs has regularly come to the fore in Moroccan media, especially with the prominence of irregular migration on the political and media agendas. Aside from these complex socio-cultural issues, which are also entangled with the issues surrounding Tamazight movements (see Maddy-Weitzman 2001), Morocco has vested economic interests in 'Africa' where King Mohamed VI has made multiple official visits recently. According to journalist Daoud, Morocco is displaying a willingness to act as 'an access platform for Europe and America in Africa' (2014).

Fig. 49 Maroc Hebdo's controversial headline.

This 'historical baggage', entangled with the EU-Moroccan security-focused approach towards irregular sub-Saharan migration, is at the heart of a 'media and political campaign aimed at stigmatising those [sub-Saharan] migrants' according to GADEM *et al.* (2013). In a September 2005 headline, *al-Shamal*, an Arabic-language Tangier newspaper, described the events around the Spanish enclaves as 'Black locusts are taking over Morocco' (Goldshmidt 2006: 1). Similarly, in November 2012, the weekly magazine *Maroc Hebdo*'s headline (2-8 November 2012; Fig. 49) caused controversy as it warned its readers against the 'black peril': 'thousands of clandestine sub-Saharan migrants' were deemed to constitute a humanitarian as well as security problem for Morocco. GADEM *et al.* (2013: 53-4) point to several other headlines from francophone and Arabic media spreading discriminatory comments about sub-Saharan migrants: prostitution, drug-smuggling and terrorism. As noted by Alami M'Chichi (2008), the media reaction to sub-Saharan migration is ambiguous, with some sympathetic headlines highlighting the difficult living conditions and discrimination faced by migrants, but also other articles contributing to xenophobia (Jacob 2012).

The 'purity' of the Moroccan kingdom as well as its sovereignty are threatened by migrants' blackness and irregular status. The interplay of the two is illustrated by the widely denounced (by NGOs and migrants) practice of *contrôles au faciès* (looks-based identity checks) whereby Moroccan authorities indiscriminately target black people on the basis of their skin colour, as it is commonly associated with undocumented migration (GADEM *et al.* 2013: 65). Police raids against migrants are often denounced as '*chasses aux noirs*' (hunting of blacks) by activists and scholars. Further, 'this institutionalized racism was reported as increasing, with EU pressure on Morocco in recent years to address illegal migration' (Law 2014: 67). For instance, the signature of the mobility partnership in 2013 was followed by an increase in indiscriminate controls, arrests and deportations against migrants as well as a series of violent crimes. There was outrage in July 2013 when *France24* journalists (France24 Observeurs 18-07-2013) uncovered a sign (*Il est strictement interdit de louer les appartements aux africains*) in a Casablanca building forbidding the rental of apartments to 'Africans' (Errazzouki 2013). The year 2013 saw an escalation of institutional violence and racism against sub-Saharan migrants as well as brutality from Moroccan citizens (Bachelet 2014a).

Although the complex contemporary dynamics surrounding racism in Morocco requires further analysis to better contextualise the discrimination faced by irregular sub-Saharan migrants (beyond the scope of this thesis), it is clear that there is a link between the overtly brutal, security-centred approach adopted by Moroccan authorities and the everyday violence and discrimination faced by sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum and beyond. As sociologist Alioua put it in a recent opinion piece in a Moroccan magazine, racist and discriminatory treatment by the police and the state 'cast stigma onto all sub-Saharan migrants living in Morocco, but they also contribute to developing xenophobia, and more precisely negrophobia, in the whole of society' (2015).[55] According to a report published jointly by NGOs and migrants associations, the securitarian treatment of migrants contributes to the assumption that sub-Saharan migrants are responsible for all issues in Morocco, especially the insecurity associated with drugs, prostitution, violence and terrorism. This facilitates hostility towards them,

[55] My translation.

exposing them to brutal and sometimes deadly acts of violence whilst simultaneously preventing them from accessing justice (GADEM *et al.* 2013: 55).

Konade, Pierre and Aziz, with the help of UNHCR and one of its Moroccan lawyers, since Aziz was an asylum seeker, lodged a complaint after the incident with Omar. Konade, missing out on many opportunities to join others in border-crossing attempts, even remained in Rabat longer than he wished since he was worried the complaint would be ignored if he were away. Nothing happened and eventually he lost patience. When they recalled the story of Omar's assault, I was puzzled by the policeman who stood idle. Aziz and the others did not share my surprise as they were used to Moroccan authorities ignoring violent acts against migrants. Many often complained of having their belongings (i.e. mobile phones and cash) stolen, confiscated without any legal basis or receipt, on the street, often in plain sight of Moroccan neighbours and passers-by, thereby sending a strong message that robbing them is acceptable.

When a young Malian was stabbed to death in a Taqaddoum grocery shop in May 2012, a brawl between young Moroccans and sub-Saharan migrants ensued. The police intervened by lining up the sub-Saharan migrants involved, including those who were wounded, and loading them onto buses bound for the Algerian border (Yabiladi 15-06-2012). Most of my informants who had been victims of crime, whether motivated by racism or not, did not even consider going to the police station for fear of being arrested. NGOs and migrants have often denounced police for arresting migrant witnesses of crimes against other migrants (including those committed by Moroccan authorities themselves) and deporting them.

GADEM *et al.* (2013: 54) note how Moroccan politicians contribute to the stigmatisation of sub-Saharan migrants. Abdelouahed Souhail, Minister of Work, declared at a United Nations meeting in July 2012 that irregular migration amplified the crisis of employment in Morocco. Further, after the election of November 2011 which put the Islamist Justice and Development Party into power, Prime Minister Benkirane declared:

> the government will reinforce both the security and property of its citizens against criminal activity, in the framework of respecting the law and the judicial authority, as such it will continue its efforts in the struggle against phenomena that represent a danger to society, or have negative effects on it, such as clandestine immigration and drugs (quoted in Law 2014: 70).

As argued by Rajaram and Grundy-Warr in their discussion of Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* (see Chapter 2), 'it is not only the state that is sovereign over the *homo sacer*, everyone (all citizens) is as sovereign before the *homo sacer* who may not defend any intrusion into her space by a formalized citizenry' (2004: 57). In Morocco, irregular, sub-Saharan migrants are subjected to state violence (including arbitrary arrests and deportations, violence, theft, etc.) as well as to 'the violence of ordinary citizens' (Khosravi 2010: 3) in the forms of (racist) attacks and muggings, sometimes leading to death. Shortly after I left the field, Ismael Faye, a Senegalese pilgrim on his way to Fez, with valid immigration documents, was stabbed to death in Rabat bus station by a Moroccan serviceman travelling on the same bus. For Levinas in his discussion of ethics, the face of a person is 'exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill' (1985: 86). Illustrating further the gravity of the act, Ismael was precisely stabbed in the face. This violent death was the apogee of a summer punctuated by racist incidents against sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco and a series of very brutal police raids in the borderlands, which led to NGOs and migrants' associations to launch an anti-racism campaign.

As noted by Law,

> since independence, black Moroccans have not organised and mobilized themselves to challenge racism and racial discrimination, predominantly positioning themselves as an integral part of the nation despite state and media racism, racial discrimination practices across a range of public service and market contexts and social barriers such as opposition to inter-marriage. Whereas sub-Saharan Africans have increasingly developed an anti-racist critique of the state and have campaigned for action despite persistent police repression, raids, detentions, arrests and intimidation of activists (Law 2014: 66).

Sub-Saharan migrants fought back. Eric William recalled to me the story of how a few months before I came to Taqaddoum, Cameroonians and other sub-Saharans had severe clashes with groups of Moroccans after a series of aggressions. Also, a range of attacks in the summer of 2012 was part of the impetus that gave birth to ALECMA, the irregular migrants' association in Douar Hajja, as sub-Saharan migrants, fed up with being assaulted, took to the streets of Taqaddoum for a collective march to their embassies in Souissi (as explained in Chapter 1).

Racism against sub-Saharan migrants was also mirrored by discriminatory attitudes towards Moroccans from the migrants themselves. As noted above, Moroccan thugs were often referred to as *clochards*. Moroccans in Douar Hajja and Maadid also used that abusive word to talk about thieves and drug-addicts. However, some migrants called every Moroccan a *clochard* or referred to the whole of Taqaddoum or Douar Hajja more specifically as '*quartier clochard*' (*clochard* neighbourhood).[56] Mirroring the racist abuse towards sub-Saharans, some migrants would complain to me that Moroccans were dirty and washed only once a week in the *hammam*. Moroccans were often called *cassa* by Cameroonians in Douar Hajja, a word originally meaning Muslim in Cameroun but used with derogative connotations to mean 'Moroccans' or 'Arabs'.

Stereotypes and misleading information about Moroccans would spread fast. Hanging out in Ivoirian Charlie's hairdressing salon, I met Ahmed who had just arrived in Morocco from Western Africa; his three-month visa was still valid. He delivered a long diatribe about how terrible and disgusting Moroccans were. Expecting to hear another story about Moroccans assaulting migrants I asked what had happened to him, but he admitted he had not spoken to any Moroccan yet.

When a middle aged Moroccan woman died near *L'Embassade*, the mourning family invited poor Moroccans from the neighbourhood over to have food. Women from other houses helped with the cooking. They also invited me and some sub-Saharans hanging out on the street to eat couscous at their house. The bereaved brother of the deceased sat next to us at a low-level table. He spoke no French and asked me very basic questions about sub-Saharans in the neighbourhood. Next to us, migrants from *L'Embassade* complained that they were only invited in a Moroccan's house for weddings and funerals, as a good deed. Some laughed, adding that there should be a *cassa* funeral every day, so that they could be invited to eat. I taught my friend Stéphane from *L'Embassade* to tell the host '*Baraka fi rask'*, the appropriate expression to a grieving person, and we left. Very aggressive attitudes from sub-Saharan migrants towards Moroccans who did not display any discriminatory behaviour were not uncommon. After having shared news in *L'Embassade* about a

[56] The machete neighbourhood (*le quartier des machetes*) was another common nickname for Taqaddoum and especially Douar Hajja.

sub-Saharan migrant left in a critical condition following a knife assault, I was walking with a Cameroonian migrant when we noticed a middle aged Moroccan man using power tools to weld the iron frame of a shop's door with no safety equipment and with one of his feet placed dangerously close to a puddle of water. My friend, very upset from the news we had received just before, started shouting that he hoped the man would kill himself. 'One dead *cassa* is a good *cassa*,' he screamed at the Moroccan man.

Hospitality and hopeful moments

Though there were tensions on the streets, migrants and Moroccans spent a lot of time cohabitating in the same space. Youths would be seen listening to music together, sharing a set of earplugs and tapping their feet to the rhythm of Moroccan or Ivorian music. A few hours after lunch, elder Moroccan men would come out to sit on the square by *château*, to chat in the sun. Though there were occasional quarrels, elder Moroccans and young migrants would share the sitting area around the large piece of concrete known as *la dalle.* Arbitrary acts of violence were a common subject of conversation in ghettoes, but I also heard of and observed acts of generosity and solidarity, though they were less talked about. When I was standing outside Marmiton's restaurant in Douar Hajja, holding her four-month-old daughter Viclane and chatting with some of the customers, a Moroccan man interrupted our conversation to greet and kiss the baby. He returned two minutes later with some yoghurt for the baby that he had purchased from the local *hanout* for Viclane. Whilst I chatted with Picas or Perez outside, Moroccans would sometimes stop to shake their hands and smile at them, wishing them well, without saying anything else.

These small observations are reminiscent of what Gilroy refers to as 'conviviality', that is 'the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere' (2004: XI). In Taqaddoum, people sometimes just got on. However, as noted by Gidley, 'the convivial turn has also been criticised for downplaying some of the structural issues bearing down on spaces of urban diversity' (2013: 367). Whilst some of these structural issues are discussed in the Introduction and the first half of Chapter 3, I wish here to point to the co-existence of acts of violence as well as generosity. In their work on Alum Rock, an inner-city

neighbourhood of Birmingham, Karner and Parker demonstrate vividly how dominant discourses of cohesion and integration 'overlook some of the complexities and ambivalences that define local lives in [their] research setting: contradictory but coexisting tendencies towards both conflict and conviviality, both local exclusions and inter-ethnic strategies for improvement, both material and infrastructural deprivation and newly emerging political alliances' (2011: 357).

Similarly, in Douar Hajja, some of my informants recalled stories of help and acts of generosity from Moroccans as well as of violence. Moroccans would give sub-Saharans food, clothing, mattresses and furniture for the house. In fact, I often heard from some Moroccans that without them, sub-Saharans would starve – an exaggeration which nevertheless points to real outpourings of compassion. When Stéphane was living in *L'Embassade,* he spent a lot of time with some of the older shop keepers at the corner of their street and Avenue El Farah. Like Moroccan men joking and playing tricks on each other on the streets, Stéphane and the much older shopkeeper Omar would pretend to fight. Stéphane called him *yekeyeke* (cunning) and *mashi nishan* (not straightforward, dishonest) in Darija whilst Omar would say Stéphane was a *kwaku* (naïve or idiot in Cameroonian slang). Another nearby shopkeeper would ask Stéphane to mind his shop when he was in the mosque on Fridays, stressing he did not trust Moroccans. Contrary to many migrants I spoke to, Stéphane never complained of being cheated by shopkeepers. They would share food and one of them sometimes took him for a drive around town. Nottingham was nicknamed *le Maire* (the mayor) by shopkeepers. Like him, Marmiton and other sub-Saharans who set up restaurants in Taqaddoum, other migrants developed strong relationships with shopkeepers in their *derb*, local neighbourhood.

Yet, Taqaddoum, with its small number of sub-Saharan migrants, cannot really be associated with what Wessendorf calls '"commonplace diversity", referring to ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity being experienced as part of a normal life and not as something particularly special' (2013: 407). Although the recent emphasis in anthropology and sociology on the concept of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007, Meissner and Vertovec 2015) might be better suited to more diverse contexts than Taqaddoum, its concern with 'the politics and poetics of belonging, and how they relate to social and spatial practices of inclusion and exclusion' (Berg and Sigona

2013) is useful to consider. Since Baumann's seminal work in Southall (1996) and Sanjek's ethnographic study in Elmhurst-Corona (1998), anthropology and urban studies have been increasingly concerned with what Amin calls 'the micropolitics of everyday social contact and encounter' (2002: 959). Thus paying attention to local dynamics in neighbourhoods such as Taqaddoum is crucial to exploring the complex and ambiguous relationships between sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans.

When I alerted my sub-Saharan informants to the existence of positive exchanges, some would argue that most Moroccans in Douar Hajja were uneducated and ignorant, which informed their behaviour towards migrants, but that those who had been '*dehors'* (outside. e.g. to Spain or France) were more likely to be understanding. For instance, Ali had lived in Ireland and often decried the treatment of sub-Saharans in Morocco, drawing parallels with his life on the streets of Dublin. He had been 'outside, *bgha*.' However, this was not a *sine qua non* condition for compassion. Ahmed would come up to speak to me in English but did not usually bother to greet the sub-Saharans around me.

Rabinow notes the importance of generosity and hospitality as values in Morocco (1977: 48). Youssef and his friends would often dismiss the existence of tensions between Moroccans and migrants, even claiming that the fact that sub-Saharans were staying increasingly longer in Taqaddoum or would often return from the borderlands testified to Moroccan inhabitants' generosity and hospitality. However, as pointed out by Dikeç, 'hospitality is a problematic notion, full of internal contradictions' (2002: 229). The work of Derrida on the notion is enlightening here. Coining the term 'hostipitality', Derrida notes that hospitality is a word of Latin origin 'which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, […] "hostility", the undesirable guest which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body […]' (2000: 3). As Dikeç puts it, hospitality requires 'that the host be the sovereign authority of his/her house, defining the conditions of hospitality, to be able to offer hospitality to the guest, to the other as stranger' (2002: 229). For Derrida then, 'we do not know what hospitality is' (2000: 6). In arguing that hospitality can 'only be possible on the condition of its impossibility' (2000: 5), Derrida points to 'the impossible pairing of the necessary ethical requirement of absolute openness to the Other, and the equally

necessary exclusionary sovereignty, which simultaneously gives the former its reality and yet negates its aspirations' (Candea and da Col 2015: 4).

Drawing on Derrida, Dikeç argues that 'hospitality […] is a refusal to conceive the host and the guest as pre-constituted identities. It is about the recognition that they are mutually constitutive of each other, and thus, relational and shifting as all identities are' (2002: 239). Similarly, drawing on Simmel's notion of the stranger, Alioua notes that Moroccans' reactions towards sub-Saharan migrants are a mix of 'rejection and fascination' (2007: 22). As Simmel has it, the archetype of the stranger, who is both far and near, 'is an element of the group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it' (1950a: 403). As argued by Alioua, migrants and Moroccans in marginal neighbourhoods share 'desire for mobility, for elsewhere, the dream of an idealised Europe, the "adventure" and the rejection of state authority as much as the feeling of being left-outs in their countries and the globalised economy' (2007: 21).[57] After having discussed similarities in experiences and aspirations between migrants and Moroccans, Ali once told me, without realising the pun, that sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans were 'in the same boat'.

For instance, defiance towards authorities brought sub-Saharan migrants and working class Moroccans together – both had to fiddle with their disconnected water meters following unpaid bills. I heard many stories of Moroccans who would hide migrants during a police raid or even guide them over rooftops to find safety in a different part of the neighbourhood. One day, Eric William was sitting in the sun on the step of the telephone shop near *L'Embassade* and, with his back towards *château*, did not see the police vans arriving for a raid on sub-Saharan migrants. The employee promptly warned him and hid him inside the shop until they passed. Yet, Picas also told me that some Moroccans liked to shout 'police' to sub-Saharans because they just enjoyed seeing them running around. Some would even grab the migrants to hand them over to the police. One of the Cameroonians in *L'Embassade* working at a vegetable stall in the nearby market was handed over by his employer to the police during a raid because he had a favour to return to a police agent.

Drawing on what Hage calls 'hope on the side of life' (Zournazi and Hage 2002: 151), Wise describes, amidst stories of intercultural tensions in Ashfield, a

[57] My translation.

suburb of Sydney, exchanges she calls 'hopeful intercultural moments' (2005: 178) with the 'capacity to facilitate the development over time of forms of interethnic belonging, security and trust' (2005: 182). In Taqaddoum, I witnessed and heard of many such small encounters. Anas had never been 'outside', yet he became friends with many residents of *Le Consulat*, near his house. He brought clothes and food to Perez and the other Ivorians living with him. He would also often come to visit Marmiton in her new restaurant. During Ramadan, shortly before I left Morocco, Anas, Perez and myself went to a café in Douar Hajja after the *ftour*, just as the streets were getting busy again in the evening. We sat inside where people could buy rolling paper from the waitress and smoke hashish without being hassled by the police thanks to some arrangement with the owner. Anas talked to me about the perception that rents were rising because of migrants, as mentioned above. He added, 'but someone *aamrou fi rassou* [clever] will know that the problem is not really about the sub-Saharans, but about poverty here.' The three of us chatted about Europe, and life for sub-Saharans and Moroccans in Douar Hajja. Anas was very knowledgeable about the living conditions of sub-Saharans in Morocco, about strategies at the border, and also knew some of the specific words used by sub-Saharans when discussing work or Europe.

After some time, we were joined by Osni who played the violin in the same band as Anas. He spoke hardly any French but he and Perez quickly befriended each other, laughing and smoking together. They started singing a love song: 'Un Gaou à Oran'.[58] Perez sang the parts in French and Ivorian, and Osni the Algerian Arabic lyrics. A few minutes later, they were both very high, their faces pressed against one another, singing Khaled's romantic 'Aisha'. Then, Osni started singing Ivoirian Alpha Blondie's 'Multipartisme (Mediocratie)'. When he reached the line, '*Les étudiants sont fâchés, ils veulent plus de liberté*' (the students are cross, they want more freedom), Perez stopped him and sang: "*Les* mounamis *sont fâchés, l'Espagne est toujours fermée*" (the *mounamis* are cross, Spain is still closed). We all laughed. Perez explained he heard this line from a Moroccan who was singing in Douar Hajja, Self-irony and jokes about common issues and thwarted opportunities were thus shown to bring people together in Douar Hajja. Some stories even involved policemen in the

[58] A song by Ivoirian Magic System and French hip-hop band 113.

forests around Nador who apologised for what they were forced to do, criticizing their own government's actions and advising migrants on how to escape the raid.

Unpredictability

As Wise notes in the context of Ashfield, people could easily switch between positive and negative attitudes (2005: 183). Similarly, Valentine argues that 'the extent to which […] everyday spatial practices and civilities truly represent, or can be scaled up to build, the intercultural dialogue and exchange necessary for the kind of new urban citizenship that commentators are either already celebrating – or at least calling for – needs much more consideration' (2008: 324-5). Furthermore, she argues that 'contact between different social groups alone is not sufficient to produce respect' (2008: 326) and shows that people can demonstrate both prejudiced opinions and the opposite in different contexts. It is useful here to return to the introductory vignette.

Despite his reggae-coloured Africa-shaped pendant, and all his talks about being a 'brother' to the migrants, Jamal was cheating them with the extortionate rent for a dilapidated place to stay in. Eric William enjoyed telling me the story of how Jamal was once 'tied and up and whipped for days' for abusing migrants (mostly Cameroonians at the time) who lived in his house as well as others passing by on the street. Jamal was forced to flee the neighbourhood for a few months, and, as Nottingham put it to me, came back 'converted', self-identifying as a 'brother' to sub-Saharans, whilst he looked for new migrants as tenants.

Jamal spent a lot of time with sub-Saharans in *Le Consulat*, especially a Cameroonian whom I always saw sitting next to him, sharing his hashish. I was told by Moroccans and sub-Saharans that Jamal was not the feared 'bandit' he used to be. For the sub-Saharan tenants, being on good terms with Jamal, or at least engaging in some friendly banter with him, could be useful; as Perez put it to me, rather than genuine friendship this 'means security' . Migrants remained cautious as he could get very aggressive, especially when high on tablets. After the incident involving Omar, Konade and Jamal at *Le Consulat*, it was unclear whether the Moroccan neighbours who were pushing the sub-Saharans to lodge a complaint were being genuinely supportive or if they were hoping to get rid of Omar, whom they feared.

Alioua, who points to forms of '*cosmopolitisme tranquille*' (easy cosmopolitanism) (2007) in marginal neighbourhoods, argues that social relations between migrants and Moroccans, based on a common project of crossing to a place where everything is possible, illustrate 'the emergence of new forms of cosmopolitanism' (Alioua 2007: 22). [59] However, as he suggests, 'fragile cosmopolitanism' might be better suited since, beyond certain forms of rejection and solidarity, there are mostly impersonal relationships of conviviality which rarely lead to personal ties and forms of solidarity (*ibid*). After reflecting with me on the problems that migrants and Moroccans have in common in Taqaddoum, Ali suddenly exclaimed: 'imagine what would happen if the sub-Saharans came close to the Moroccans in Douar Hajja. We would be together against the government!' There was still little to spark Ali's imagination in Taqaddoum. Yet, as described in Chapter 1, Moroccan and sub-Saharan activists were involved together in bringing about changes in Morocco.

The week before I left Morocco, I was astonished to find that Anas had recently betrayed a group of Camerounians who had bought a *zodiac* from him to cross to Spain. I was surprised when Eric William told me that this was the reason behind a recent fight in Douar Hajja. Whilst I remained astounded, Eric William shook his head; he knew all along this would happen:

> Why are you surprised? He is from Taqaddoum, he is poor. We went to ask for the 3500dh back. The whole family came out with knives and told us to get lost. A Moroccan there explained to us that they had used the money for Ramadan. The police came and asked what was going on. They said it was the blacks. So they told us to go or they would arrest us. I said 'let's leave it' to the others. But I had told them [the other Cameroonians] before: 'what are you doing dealing money for zodiacs with a Moroccan living in Douar Hajja? He also needs money. It is better to avoid problems.

My friend Eric William was particularly inclined to this kind of self-righteous diatribe. Yet, many migrants in Taqaddoum usually shared stories highlighting the unpredictability of sustaining relationships with Moroccans. Yassine, who was the last, though disliked, chief of ghetto at L'*Embassade*, often repeated to me that Moroccans were 'unpredictable'. For him the scar running along his face was a reminder of this (Fig. 50). A Moroccan neighbour he had no quarrel with pulled out a

[59] My translation.

knife and casually slashed his face while walking past, high on tablets. Unpredictable was also how Ivoirian Mohamoud would describe Moroccans. Mohamoud spoke classical Arabic and could get by in the Moroccan Arabic he picked up on the street of Douar Hajja. Language skills amongst my informants helped, but it was not sufficient to bridge the gap. Mohamoud would often say there were bad and good Moroccans. But when asked if he had any Moroccan friends he would say that 'no, it is just babble [*causerie*] and that's it.' He often shared his anxieties with me when working as a cobbler in the alleyway near *Le Consulat*; he worried that the youths standing near him, sometimes engaging him in casual conservation, could suddenly flip and assault him, as they had done in the past.

Fig. 50 Stab wound on Cameroonian migrant's face.

This 'unpredictability' did not always refer to past experiences with specific people but translated into apprehensions about all Moroccans. Ivoirian Charlie, who worked as a hairdresser in a very narrow shack in Douar Hajja, told me that his neighbour was a gendarme or a policeman. When his neighbour went out to work in the morning, he would sometimes leave his young son in the hairdressing salon with sub-Saharan migrants. This way the child would stay inside watching Michael Jackson

video clips in the hairdressing salon with good-mannered Charlie, and not be badly influenced by some of the Moroccan youths on the street. However, Charlie added, 'When he goes out, I don't know what he does. Maybe he beats blacks in the city centre. But here he is nice with me when he comes back from work.'

Lamine was more fluent in Moroccan Arabic than Mohamoud. His language skills and friendliness meant he was constantly getting freebies from Moroccans in his building and neighbourhood. I met him with Moroccan Youssef from the same street and expected to spend much time with the two of them. However, they hardly spent time together, and their friendship was probably partially sustained because they were both friends with me. First of all, Lamine lied about his status, telling Youssef that he was a student. But Youssef grew suspicious and asked me several times if it was true. I gave vague answers and he looked slightly disconcerted by this, though I am not sure if it was because Lamine had no papers and did not trust him. Whenever I challenged Lamine about this, he would ambiguously answer that yes, Youssef was his friend and then add that he had 'no friends', only 'acquaintances', in Morocco. Lamine also admitted to me that Youssef was not welcome in his house because of his flatmates who did not want Moroccans over. When I asked Youssef about inviting Lamine over, he was embarrassed and mumbled something indiscernible about his parents. Aron and others living with Lamine often described to me how Moroccans were 'unpredictable' and did not want them over in their flats. After I insisted I did not understand why he kept Youssef at bay so much, Lamine looked strangely concerned and whispered that 'one never knows' and that Moroccans were 'unpredictable'.

As mentioned above, many would simply dismiss all Moroccans as unpredictable, violent and drug-addicted '*clochards*'. However, many were aware of the socio-economic issues faced by Moroccans, as sub-Saharan migrants were not the only ones struggling in Taqaddoum. When I asked Mohamoud why he had no Moroccan friends, he replied that

> Making friends is easy and not easy. We live badly. [Moroccans] do not let us enter into their houses, it is hard to get in. You have no work, you become friend with a Moroccan [*te mettre derrière*].[60] But then, when it is you who gets money, then you will leave, or you will want to send it to

[60] Literally, 'to put yourself behind'. This evokes a friendship tainted with dependence but also reciprocity when the wheel has turned over. However, as pointed out by Mohamoud, when the sub-Saharan has money, he has to move on.

> your family. We have no time, I am sat here from 8am until 8pm working. The majority of people in Taqaddoum have no means, they ask you for forgiveness because they have no money; yourself you can see it. Even for the Moroccans it is hard for them, they do not work; there is unemployment here.

Some sub-Saharan migrants then were well aware of the socio-economic issues faced by Moroccans. As Valentine has it, 'encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power' (2008: 333). Exploring relations between migrants and Moroccans in neighbourhoods like Taqaddoum requires paying attention to issues of inequality for Moroccans too. Genuine and sustainable spaces of interdependence between migrants and Moroccans, rather than mere 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005: 149), necessitate both the tackling of institutional racism and discrimination against sub-Saharan migrants as well as confronting inequality issues for working class Moroccans. As Ali put it to me, this would require, for the benefit of both migrants and Moroccans in Taqaddoum, 'a new Morocco'.

Conclusion

The themes and topics of discussion with the 'original people' of Taqaddoum (e.g. entrapment and lack of opportunities; luck and destiny; hope and imagination) are further discussed throughout the thesis in my exploration of the experiences of sub-Saharan migrants. There were many parallels between the desires, expectations and hopes (as well as their limits and constraints) of disfranchised Moroccans and irregular sub-Saharans in the marginal neighbourhood of Taqaddoum. Yet, as described above, relationships between Moroccan citizens and sub-Saharan migrants were fraught with everyday tensions, which could lead to violent, racist attacks, as well as hostility from Moroccan authorities and mainstream media. Sub-Saharan migrants' brutal ordeal is in stark contrast with ideals of hospitality associated with Morocco. Yet, as Dikeç has it, hospitality is 'a constant process of engagement, negotiation and perhaps contestation' (2002: 237). Relationships between sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans oscillated between friendship and enmity. Moreover, as illustrated above, Taqaddoum was the locus of 'hopeful' encounters between youths who shared similar difficulties and aspirations. However, this chapter has highlighted the

'unpredictability' and limits to such 'hopeful' encounters in one of Rabat's most marginal neighbourhoods.

When discussing everyday violence and unpredictable relations with Moroccan neighbours, Mohamoud would often add 'we have to endure [*subir*]. […] We are not in our country.*'* But, as explained above, migrants were not passive recipients of violent, discriminatory acts; they sometimes fought back. Furthermore, it is necessary not to depict migrants as suffering subjects only (Robbins 2013). Hence, Chapter 7 explores further what migrants meant by 'having to endure' such violent acts. Its discussion of the limits of solidarity amongst sub-Saharan migrants also echoes the present's chapter focus on ambiguous relationships.

Moroccans often pointed to another kind of unpredictability when discussing relationships in the neighbourhood. Ali was sympathetic to the violent ordeal of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, but he often also voiced his frustration: 'They say they are *passager* [temporary but also passenger]! Five years here is not *passsager!'* Chatting with a Moroccan youth outside Douar Hajja about why he was so nice to sub-Saharans, Ali simply replied, 'There have been Africans here since I was a child.' He would complain that migrants stay 'close to themselves and never come to us, the Moroccans.' He criticized migrants for not speaking any Arabic or not making efforts to learn, though he failed to acknowledge that in Ireland he learnt English thanks to state-sponsored programmes. Nevertheless, he had a point that migrants were always talking about leaving but remained for increasingly longer periods, and that they could simply disappear for the borderlands at any time without notice. Hence, in Chapter 4, I examine the issue of destination for sub-Saharan migrants and their fragmented journeys.

Chapter 4 'Looking for the objective'

During idle afternoons spent chatting with Lamine in his small room in Maadid, my Burkinabe friend would share his anxieties and indecision over what to do next and, especially, where to go. He often asked me for advice which I was at a loss to give. In the same sentence, without even catching his breath, Lamine would express the simultaneous, and seemingly contradictory, wish to stay in Morocco, cross to Europe and return to Burkina Faso. When Lamine's scholarship to study Islamic Studies in Egypt fell through because of the unrest surrounding the demise of President Mubarak, he decided to go to Morocco by his own means and study there. However, living as an irregular migrant in Morocco did not provide the educational opportunities Lamine hoped for. Besides his university ambitions, he pursued the longstanding dream of becoming a professional footballer, playing in a small Moroccan team; he was also considering a career in comedy and theatre, either in Europe or Western Africa.[61]

Lamine only warned me of his return to Burkina Faso a few days before he was due to travel in mid-December 2012, first by bus towards Mauritania. Two days after his departure, Lamine rang me. He was really distressed and explained that, along with at least twenty other people, he was stuck in the no man's land between the Moroccan and the Mauritanian border posts. Rather than taking the long bus journey, he had travelled by car with an Ivoirian man whom he met outside the Mauritanian embassy. The laissez-passer he had obtained from his contact in the Burkinabe consulate had been enough to leave Morocco but the Mauritanian border guards told him he needed a visa from the embassy in Rabat. Without time to take his belongings, he was grabbed by the ear and thrown out of the car. Lamine explained that after chatting with the Moroccan border guards in Arabic, they had warned him not to cross without a visa; they encouraged him to tear up his laissez-passer and pretend he was Mauritanian, but Lamine had not believed them.

I rang my friend Stéphane from GADEM to explain what had happened but they were already aware of at least a few Senegalese migrants in the same situation following their arrest and deportation from Laayoune, as well as some Ivoirians who were swiftly released following intervention from their diplomatic representatives.

[61] I met Lamine at the same theatre workshop where I encountered my Moroccan informant Youssef.

Over the next few days, the issue attracted the attention of some Moroccan media (Yabiladi 22-12-2012) as the number of migrants rose to about fifty, including refugees recognized by the UNHCR in Morocco, amongst whom were pregnant women and very young children. After arresting migrants across Morocco, the authorities brought them this far south in buses instead of the usual deportation to the Algerian border. Mauritania, which had previously turned a blind eye to returning migrants entering its territory, now refused to let them pass; a border guard explained they did not want 'Morocco's garbage'. Such change in practice may have stemmed from renewed tensions between Morocco and Mauritania at the time.

Migrants suffered from the heat and cold and were supplied with food and blankets by travellers driving through; we had distributed some leaflets to travellers queuing outside the Mauritanian embassy. Lamine sometimes sounded delirious on the phone, complaining that there was not even a tree around for shade. In the meantime, he had befriended some of the Mauritanian guards, who also spoke Fula. They let him sleep in their barracks rather than the abandoned truck where most other migrants were sleeping, shared some food with him and once even given him money to buy medicine in a Mauritanian market for another Burkinabe who was ill. However, migrants grew impatient and desperate as many wanted to be allowed back into Morocco after their deportation, whilst others who had travelled purposefully to the border simply wished to be able to continue their journeys south. Some decided to take their chances and walk back into Morocco through the desert stretch scattered with land mines– they were not heard of again.

With the help of my partner and some friends, we tried to get the Burkinabe Consul in Rabat to intervene. The sub-Saharan migrants' diplomatic authorities were mostly uncaring. It was as a result of a lot of pressure from GADEM and Caritas that the Senegalese rescued their nationals. Things only changed for Lamine after a petition was launched, Burkinabe media became involved, and the help of American and Italian diplomats in Ouagadougou was secured. The Burkinabe ambassador in Dakar flew to Mauritania shortly before New Year's Eve to release him, two other Burkinabe and a Gambian. Some migrants were still left there, but contact with them was lost.

I spoke with Lamine on Skype when he reached Mauritania but we lost touch when he passed through conflict-stricken Mali. He rang me a few months later to tell

me he was in Saudi Arabia, working in a hotel whilst playing football in a small team. We have since spoken regularly and he continues to share his thoughts over what he should do next, and where to go. He has been thinking about crossing to Europe or maybe returning to Morocco since he heard about the recent changes in Moroccan politics of migration (see Conclusion). Last time we spoke, he also considered setting up an import-export business to Burkina Faso.

Lamine's story strikingly illustrates how, in 'the age of migration' (Castles, *et al.* 2014), mobility is not evenly distributed. Whilst the overall thesis seeks to contribute to the current debates 'towards a politics of mobility' (Cresswell 2010), the present chapter is particularly concerned with my informants' tortuous journeys, constituted by both stasis and movement. Where did sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco want to go? Was there a fixed destination? Drawing on Salazar and Smart's injunction '[not] to discuss human mobility as a brute fact but rather analyse how mobilities, as socio-cultural constructs, are experienced and imagined' (2011: v), this chapter seeks to avoid analytical pitfalls associated with categories such as transit migration by examining migrants' (im)mobility through their own idioms. In examining how migrants' simultaneous contemplation of settling, return and onward movement challenges linear depictions of migration, I also pay attention to the ways 'migrants strategise according to a limited range of choices' (Jeffery and Murison 2011: 136). Firstly, the chapter discusses how the blurry notion of 'transit' migration does not fit with migrants' fragmented journeys. Secondly, it examines migrants' articulation of 'adventure' and 'objective', often defined as 'looking for one's life', as key concepts to explore their desires and imagination. Thirdly, after discussing the prominence of waiting, despite my informants' epic tales of 'adventure', the chapter draws on the concept of 'navigation' to explore how migrants, in their 'quest for the objective', adapted their migratory journeys to changing circumstances.

Fragmented journeys and the issue of 'transit'

Eric William seldom spoke to me about his journey to Morocco. Whenever I approached the topic, he would grow sombre and laconically reply he had 'seen things' before changing the subject. I took the hint and did not trouble him with recollections of harrowing experiences. As pointed out by Malkki, the success of fieldwork

'hing[es] not so much on a determination to ferret out 'the facts' as on a willingness to leave some stones unturned, to listen to what my informants deemed important and to demonstrate my trustworthiness by not prying where I was not wanted' (Malkki 1995b: 51). Lamine, usually ecstatic and mirthful when chatting, looked very distressed whenever mentioning border guards' exactions against migrants.

The only journey-related stories people liked to tell were trickster-stories demonstrating migrants' wit and cunning. Lamine amused himself and others in retelling time after time how Algerian police stormed the ghetto where he was staying. Since he pretended to be a black Algerian from the Sahara, a policeman challenged him to sing the national anthem. Lamine improvised by humming a random melody, occasionally inserting words in Arabic like 'nation'. They arrested everyone but him. Lamine joked that the policeman clearly did not know the Algerian national anthem either.

The details of my informants' difficult journeys to Morocco are beyond the focus of the thesis. To some extent, this has been documented elsewhere, for instance in migrants' published accounts of their travels (see Traoré and Le Dantec 2012, Didier Yene 2010) as well as in accounts by Italian investigative journalists (Liberti 2008, Gatti 2007). I could not do much to alleviate the suffering involved in recollections of painful images occasionally mentioned: spotting skeletons and seeing friends falling from speeding trucks in the desert, sexual violence, hunger, murders, beatings, etc.

Migrants' journeys were anything but linear and the concept of a fixed destination from the onset is often a fallacy. Stéphane left Cameroon in early January 2012 and found himself without money in Algeria, where he started doing manual jobs. However, things did not turn out the way he expected:

> When I left home, I had no programme. I thought Algeria would be good for work. I needed money for my family. But there were too many problems, some friends told me to come to Morocco. I saw it was the same thing, and now people tell me about Spain. I do not regret anything. It is God. If I have not made it yet, it is because it was not my time yet, it is about perseverance.

For some, the journey to Morocco took years rather than months or weeks, as they got stuck on the way and had to work to pay for the subsequent leg of their journeys.

Others stopped to settle for some time, before moving on to Morocco, where they had not necessarily intended to go.

Sylvin left Cameroon in early March 2006. He tried to get a visa for France but was cheated and lost some money. Disillusioned, he decided to leave Cameroon anyway: 'I said "Mum, I want to get out [*sortir*], I need to leave Cameroon. I cannot live here anymore."' His mother gave him money and contacted a Malian man known for facilitating journeys. The destination would be Mali, but to save money Sylvin then decided to leave alone and asked some Malian acquaintances for advice on the itinerary. He explained that he finally reached Nigeria after a number of scams on the way:

> I met people going to Algeria but I told them I was going to Mali. I was not thinking of going to Algeria and Europe; my destination was Mali. But it changed when I got to Ghana. People told me: 'you have studied audio-visual, go to the Ivory Coast'. So I did. I arrived in Ivory Coast on 7th August 2006, on Independence Day.

After various encounters, Sylvin started working in radio stations and was, by his own account, quite successful. He travelled to Malta for work and his mother pressed him to cross irregularly to Italy. But he did not have to since he expected to get a visa for Germany very soon. However, he found himself in some difficulties and had to return to Cameroon in 2011. After a year, which saw no improvements, Sylvin returned to the Ivory Coast and tried to get a visa for Australia with the help of a Congolese friend. Again, things did not go as planned. He talked with his childhood friend Picas, who was in Morocco and advised Sylvin he could find some opportunities there. Sylvin took the road again but found himself penniless in Mali where he had to sell his laptop and all his other valuables. After finally reaching Algeria, he had to stay there for a few weeks, again to make some more money. Finally, in spring 2012, he reached Morocco where he tried to get a job and settle, but finally gave up in order to 'start shocking [*choquer*] for Europe'.[62] 'I tried five times but, by the grace of God, next time will be the right one,' he said. He crossed to mainland Spain shortly after this conversation.

[62] I return to the term '*choquer'* further below.

According to Collyer, 'it is often not the case that entire journeys are planned in advance but one stage may arise from the failure of a previous stage, limiting future options and draining resources' (2010: 275). As demonstrated by Sylvin and Stéphane, migrants' journeys were fragmented, and getting to Morocco, which was not always intended from the onset, could take a long time as they stopped for lack of resources before moving towards a different place, where they hoped to find better opportunities.

Migrants in Taqaddoum were disappointed with Morocco and what it had to offer them. They often complained that TV in Cameroon and Ivory Coast showed off the new swish tramway system in Rabat, tall, modern buildings in Casablanca and luxurious *riads* in Marrakesh, not places like Taqaddoum. Even for those who chose Morocco as a 'destination', like Lamine, Morocco was disenchanting. Migrants also did not expect the crossing to Spain to be such a harsh and dangerous 'obstacle'. As mentioned in the introduction, the length of stay in Morocco had dramatically increased for migrants. In Taqaddoum, two years — as in the case of Stéphane and Sylvin — was average amongst my informants.

Most of my informants in Taqaddoum had their eyes set on Spain and the rest of Europe; they were preparing their '[border crossing] attempts' (referred to as '*tentatives*'): resting, healing, looking for money and buying materials to go to the borderlands in order to cross the fences and the water. A minority, like Dinar, who had been in Taqaddoum for five years or even longer, had given up on trying to cross to Spain and were attempting to make some money with businesses (see Chapter 6) before heading back to their home countries. Eric William explained that most of the Cameroonian '*anciens*' were gone, the past generations of travellers previously living in Taqaddoum were either in Europe, had returned home or relocated to different neighbourhoods in Rabat or elsewhere in Morocco.

As noted in Chapter 2, migrants in Taqaddoum's ghettoes were 'thinking of new horizons'. They were selecting the strict minimum to take with them on inflatable boats or to carry over the fences to get to Spain as part of border crossing 'attacks' (further described below in this chapter), or they were stuffing their bags to go back home. However, when returning was possible going back 'empty handed' was still associated with shame. As pointed out by Khosravi (2010), shame has been largely neglected in accounts of migration. Perez and Aziz from *Le Consulat* would talk of

tremendous expectations from friends, families and neighbours (see Chapter 7). Whenever I discussed the possibility of returning, Eric William would laconically shoot back at me, 'To do what?' For sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum, the prospect of 'starting from scratch', after 'all those years', was daunting. The longer they waited, the more difficult returning would be. In this context, signing up to IOM for their 'voluntary return' programme was a difficult choice to make; the violence in the borderlands and the precarious living conditions in Taqaddoum compelled a substantial minority to reluctantly 'choose' returning (see de Haas 2012). Because this process with IOM was itself protracted, some of my informants, like Lamine and others in *L'Embassade,* chose to return by their own means – a very dangerous journey as illustrated above.

Yet, migrants in Taqaddoum often did not consider returning home after failing to cross to Europe as the final leg of their journey. It was important 'to take a step back in order to better jump' (*reculer pour mieux sauter*). Some migrants in Taqaddoum had returned to their home country and come back to Morocco to try again, sometimes financing the return with the money from IOM's programme. Anastasia, who ran a restaurant with Dinar, had returned to Cameroon to place her young child with relatives and came back to Morocco with some food supplies for her restaurant business. Signing up with IOM was often talked about as a remote option: signing up 'just in case' was a way of keeping things open.[63]

As discussed in the Introduction, Morocco has long been described as a country of transit to Europe, which stood close but barely reachable for sub-Saharan migrants. Recent studies and reports on sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco have decried the 'myth of transit' (Cherti and Grant 2013). Camille, coordinator at GADEM, argued that Moroccan authorities often appealed to the notion of 'transit' in order to justify the lack of enforcement of migrants' rights. Yet, most of my informants in Taqaddoum were interested in crossing to Europe. Some, like Perez, had intended to do so since the very beginning. Nevertheless, the notion of 'transit' and the 'fixed destination' it implies seem inadequate to account for the journeys. Many, like Stéphane, had 'no programme' and for most, journeys had developed in unpredictable ways.

[63] To some extent, this is reminiscent of the tactic by some of my informants of filing an asylum claim as described in Chapter 1.

Düvell traces the emergence of the concept of transit in policy discourse in the early 1990s. However, he notes that despite its widespread use, there is no adequate or established definition, rather incoherent interpretations. Its emergence being entangled with political motivations, 'it is often negatively connoted and highly politicised' (2012: 416). Recently, transit has been the focus of a scholarly debate aimed at stressing its intertwinement with Europe's preoccupations (Collyer *et al.* 2012, Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008). For instance, Düvell notes that 'the transit migration discourse coincides with EU efforts to negotiate return and deportation policies with many non-EU neighbours and various sending countries' (2012: 420). According to Collyer and de Haas, this convenient concept, which glosses over migrants' varied legal status, journeys and intentions, 'serves an important function in EU discourse on migration, allowing all migrants in this region to be primarily identified by their potential to reach Europe, and to cast them collectively as a "migration liability"' (2012: 477; see also de Haas 2007a). Hence, like the notion of 'illegality' (see De Genova 2002: 424), 'transit' migration needs to be examined in terms of its production.

In their review of the relevance of the transit category in the context of sub-Saharan migration in North Africa, Collyer and de Haas argue that the rigid manner with which the concept is employed

> can also be misleading by ignoring that journeys may take years, are generally made in stages, often have no fixed end-points. Even when they do have clear destinations, they are not necessarily located in Europe. Second, North Africa is a destination in its own right and at least temporary settlement has been the rule rather than the exception. Third, a considerable proportion of migrants failing to enter Europe prefer to settle as a 'second best' option rather than return. The complexity, diversity and fluidity of migration experiences raises [*sic*] some fundamental doubts about the usefulness of the term transit migration to describe a phenomenon and, certainly, individual experiences (2012: 479).

Hence, they argue that although the concept of transit seems to offer an alternative to dichotomous categories such as origin-destination, 'this is misleading because the term does not challenge but actually *reinforces* the notion that migratory moves have fixed starting and end points' (2012: 476).

Drawing on Tarrius (1989) and re-coining the term 'transmigration', Alioua's exploration of sub-Saharan migration in Morocco articulates the notions of '*migration par étape*' (migration in stages) to explore complex migratory journeys. Hence, he

argues that it is necessary to move beyond dichotomies (emigration and immigration) and suggests a ternary approach embodied in the suffix 'trans' to analyse complex journeys which are neither certain nor unilateral (2011: 279; see also Pian 2009). Such an approach is useful in accounting for migrants' fragmented journeys. However, as Stock has it, it is also crucial to analyse 'transit migration epistemologically from a different angle' (2012: 1593). In the next section, drawing from recent theoretical contributions that stress the importance of migrants' desires, aspirations and imagination, I propose to achieve this by exploring migrants' own idioms in describing their migratory journeys.

Adventure's objective and migrants' imaginaries

Sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum self-identified as 'adventurers'. After fleeing the recent political unrest in Libya in 2011, where he had worked for many years, Patrick ended up in Algeria but found no valuable opportunity and ran out of money. Other migrants advised him to go to Morocco. Once there, he was again disappointed and thought of crossing to Europe, something he had previously never considered: 'I arrived here [in Morocco] and realized how hard it is. If there is an opportunity to go somewhere else, why not go?' When discussing his peregrinations, the uncertain future and the hardship endured, he often declared 'this is the adventure'. Pressed to clarify what he meant, Patrick explained that 'adventure is when you leave your country for whatever destination, with all the obstacles that you may find on the way. On the road, many things happen. There is first the fact that you do not know where you are going and you do not know the way.' When I asked what his plan was, he paused for a long time and told me it was to 'better [his] living conditions.' Patrick explained that it could be Morocco if things were better; or Libya if the political situation improved significantly; or Central Africa if Bozizé left power; or, possibly, Europe, though he had not tried yet.

Definitions of adventure I elicited from my sub-Saharan informants pointed to a hopeful quest for a better life in the face of curbed opportunities, a readiness to face uncertainty and risk their lives rather than remain to endure what they considered a certain but gloomy future since they had none of the contacts and resources needed to find valuable opportunities in their home countries. For Houdou, adventure was

> the quest for a life more bearable. […] If we have taken the road, it is because we hoped to find a place where we could express ourselves freely and build on our talents. That is why we have gone on the adventure. Because in our country, it does not work. A lot of things impede, kill your genius. That is how the idea to leave [*sortir*] comes about. We do not know where chance comes from, we took the road hoping to have a better life.

In her seminal work on adventure and African migration, Bredeloup notes how recently in the media migrants crossing the straits of Gibraltar and the Sahara have been, often negatively, portrayed as adventurers as 'their trajectories are sometimes assimilated to those of desperadoes and outlaws' (2013: 170). She argues that the 'figure of the adventurer' is not new, rather, it is a 'recurring motif' (2013: 170), and lists other 'pioneers of the African migratory adventure', such as the diamond traders of the Senegal River Valley (Bredeloup 2008). For adventurers, everything is possible, one's range of opportunities can widen 'on the condition that one decides about one's destiny and proves willing to take risks and undergo new trials' (Bredeloup 2013: 180). Adventurers illustrate how migration is not solely determined by misery and danger stemming from the different politico-economic crises in Africa. Indeed, personal motivations and ambitions are important catalysts too (Bredeloup 2008: 287). However, rather than exploring the genesis of the 'figure of the adventurer', I am concerned with examining how irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum discussed their migratory project in terms of adventure.

When discussing adventure, sub-Saharan migrants usually referred to two principal constitutive elements: 'suffering' in difficult 'conditions' (see Chapter 7), and 'the objective'. Whilst often loosely defined, 'the objective' was discussed by migrants as '*chercher sa vie*' (to look for one's life) or '*se chercher*' (to look for one's self). For Bredeloup, this 'injunction' is akin with breaking the monotony of life for sub-Saharans and '[becoming] authors of their own destiny precisely at a time in which Africa is immerged in a social and economic crisis' (2013: 174). Whilst Chapter 5 returns to the issue of becoming authors of their own destiny, in this chapter I am more specifically concerned with examining how 'the objective' is not commensurable with a specific 'destination'.

Migrants in Taqaddoum repeatedly stressed that they needed to look for their lives 'outside' (*dehors*). In their 'quest for a life more bearable', sub-Saharans needed

to ‘exit’ (*sortir*) their home country to escape the obstacles, such as poverty and corruption that impede the development of their talent. As Jackson puts it, ‘impoverishment is never simply a lack of income but a deprivation of opportunities to exercise one’s ability’ (2011: 38). Whilst sat outside *Le Consulat*, I was chatting with Aziz as he mended shoes alongside Ahmed and Junior. A middle-aged Moroccan man brought a very worn-out pair of shoes for Aziz to repair. As he was leaving, Junior pulled a disgusted face: ‘They do not even have the money to buy themselves new shoes to go to work. They are born poor and will remain poor. But you can be born poor and become a minister, is it not true Sébastien?’ In his exploration of existential dissatisfaction amongst Sierra Leoneans, Jackson notes that ‘well-being is always contingent on more than one’s particular historical or cultural situation. It reflects a sense of discontinuity between who we are and what we might become’ (2011: ix).

Amongst sub-Saharan adventurers who decided to overcome obstacles by looking for better opportunities elsewhere, ‘coercion and frustration join freedom as motion is socially informed’ (Tsing 2005: 6). As described in Chapter 1, sub-Saharan migrants left their home countries for complex reasons, thus it is necessary to challenge dichotomies such as forced-voluntary migration. According to Salazar and Smart, ‘there is no clear-cut separation between choice and constraint, between forced and voluntary mobility’ (2011: v).[64] All my informants in Taqaddoum, regardless of the particular circumstances of their departure, talked of reaching the objective and needing to ‘exit’, to reach this ‘outside’.

The extensive references to ‘outside’ and ‘exiting’ mirrored some of the statements (e.g. *bgha*) amongst my Moroccan informants. As described in Chapter 3, such utterances stemmed from young Moroccans’ imaginaries as they envisioned a better life elsewhere, usually in Europe. Drawing on Yurchak’s ‘imaginary elsewhere’ (2005: 159), Elliot argues that in central Morocco ‘the native concept of l-barra [is] a polysemic concept that signifies simultaneously specific geographical places (e.g., ‘Europe’), inexhaustible possibilities for better futures, and, more metaphysically, an entity with unique powers over people and things’ (2012: 1).[65]

[64] Such analytical comment could easily be instrumentalized by hostile migration politics.
[65] Elliot uses a different transcription of ‘outside’ in Moroccan Arabic.

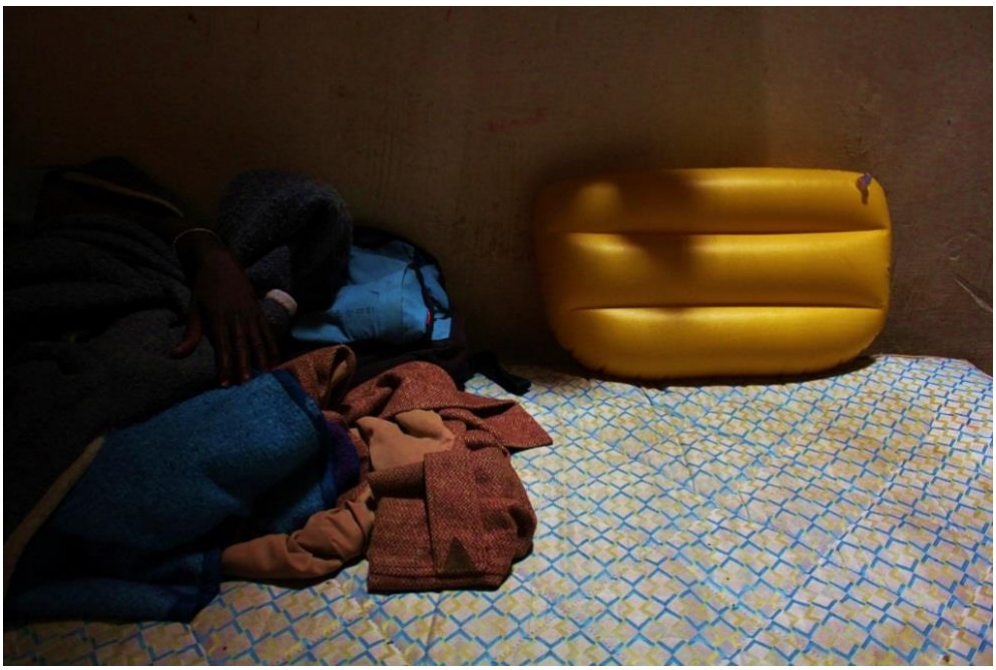

Fig. 51 A buoy in a room of *Le Consulat*

According to Salazar, 'migration is as much about […] imaginaries as it is about the actual physical movement from one locality to another and back' (2011: 586). Adventurers in Taqaddoum often described how they had reached the decision to leave after witnessing other adventurers' material wealth when visiting on holiday or returning to settle. Media were also often mentioned as a source of inspiration. Gathered in informal restaurants, migrants would passionately discuss current affairs in France and Europe more generally whilst watching rolling news coverage on French channels. Exchanges also included misconceptions. For instance, no matter how many times I challenged him, Eric William would often vehemently affirm, and try to convince me, that in Europe 'everything is built, they don't need to build anything anymore, there is everything'. There was also a lot of banter. Whilst migrants in *Le Consulat* discussed which European countries were part of Schengen, the conversation would slip towards relationships with 'white women' and how they would cope with it. Ahmed, in a high-pitched voice, made the others laugh: 'they just wake up and tell you "darling, you have to go and bring the children to school, I am tired." They do not have the same customs. You cannot do karate with your wife there.' Hence, 'migration thus always presupposes some knowledge or, at least, rumors of "the other side"' (Salazar 2011: 587). Aside from mass media and returnees (see Salazar 2011),

migrants' imaginaries were also fed by the tales and images of travelling companions who had just made the crossing and rushed to take pictures of themselves under the Eiffel Tower. Such images sometimes entailed deceit and a range of ethical issues surrounding migrants' self-representation (see Chapter 7).

Imaginaries of what life would be like elsewhere even manifested themselves in dreams. A group of Cameroonian teenagers showed me what they used as pillows – the small buoys sold with the zodiacs used to make the crossing to Spain (Fig. 51).[66] Mohamed explained that resting his head on it at night, he often dreamt of what life would be like in Europe once he had crossed. The buoys had been scribbled all over by the youths with the names of their girlfriends back home (see Fig. 52). In Taqaddoum, rather than the 'myth of return', there was the myth of getting to a place from which they would eventually return successfully. However, not all adventurers discussed returning to their home country and what it would be like – some deemed it impossible or undesirable.

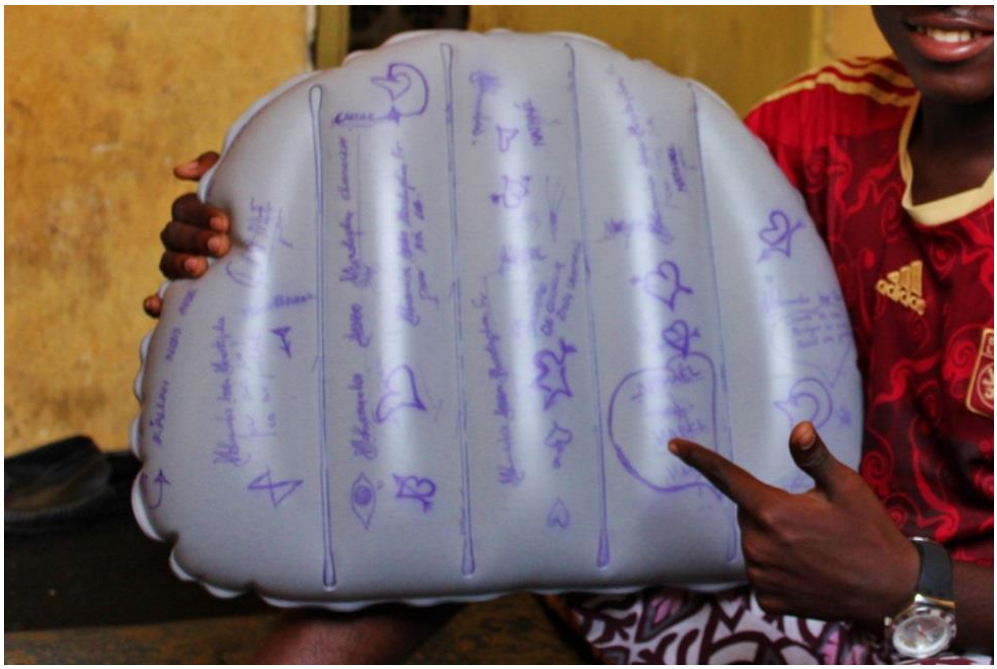

Fig. 42 Scribbling on a buoy.

In his analysis of well-being in Sierra Leone, Jackson notes that 'many young Sierra Leoneans feel they have been locked out of a world where one's worth depends

[66] As explained in the Introduction, "zodiac" (Fig. 57 below) is a term employed by sub-Saharan migrants to refer to a precarious, inflatable rubber dinghy (the type often used by tourists along beaches in the summer holiday period) on which they paddled to cross to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, or directly to the Iberian Peninsula.

on purchasing power and the conspicuous consumption of foreign goods' (2011: 2). Further, he notes the existence of other contemporary avenues 'for becoming a person of substance – acquiring money, getting an education, going abroad, entering politics. Indeed, many young people have adopted the idea of development not only as a national goal but a personal one' (2011: 91). Similarly, amongst migrants in Taqaddoum, this was most visible in the search, especially amongst younger migrants, for designer clothing, large sunglasses, fancy mobile phones and watches (often counterfeit) as signs of success in adventure. For Salazar, 'the West does not merely stand for a better education and more money; it also means fame, victory, respect and admiration. Young Africans in general have a strong desire to belong to this fantastic cosmopolis, to the promising world out there' (2011: 589). Houdou, like many others, made it clear that his dreams of a better education and work opportunities could only be fulfilled in Europe. This could not be achieved at home. According to Ferguson, 'Africa's participation in "globalisation" […] has certainly not been a matter simply of "joining the world economy"; perversely, it has instead been a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion' (2006: 14).

One popular activity amongst migrants was the digital alteration of pictures to post on social media such as Facebook. For instance, Ali Sniper from *Le Consulat* posted a picture of a lavish villa with a large swimming pool, and a picture of himself on a gigantic flat screen TV alongside the pool. Another popular type of photo-montage was the insertion of migrants' pictures (also sometimes of their own children back home) on a large screen next to images of politicians such as Barack Obama, seemingly video-conferencing with the migrants. Following Ferguson and his examination of mimicry, I would argue that this last example 'is neither a mocking parody nor a pathetically colonized aping but a haunting claim for equal rights of membership in a spectacularly unequal global society' (Ferguson 2002: 565).

Such gestures showed migrants striving to enter into conversation with a global order which thus far had proven to be highly unequal. Amongst adventurers in Morocco, the act of crossing to Spain was referred to as *rentrer* (to enter) as well as '*boza*'. Many online videos of large-scale crossings into Ceuta and Melilla depict young men running and chanting '*boza*' on the Spanish side. Although the etymology

of the term is unclear, my Cameroonian informants explained that it simply meant 'to enter' in Cameroonian slang but that amongst adventurers the term meant crossing into Europe and had become a synonym for 'victory'.

These examples of how migrants' imaginaries were projected towards Europe are reminiscent of what Jackson describes as the 'mimetic desire that afflicts all human beings to some degree – the craving to possess what others have, simply because one does not have these things oneself, and the experience of this lack as an injustice, an affront' (2011: 79). Whenever I asked Eric William how he was doing, he would reply '*pas comme toi*' (not like you). This sardonic reply, although delivered in typical good-humour, pointed to a gap in opportunities between the two of us. 'Imaginaries of adventure' (Bredeloup 2008: 295) often appealed to social justice. 'I am going to re-claim my grand-father's right,' Ivoirians in *Le Consulat* told me, referring to colonial corps' participation during the two world wars. Also, Perez often jokingly shouted '*à chacun son Français*' (to each one their French), a formula associated with pro-Laurent Bagbo supporters angry with French interventionism in the Ivoirian electoral crisis. Ivoirians in *Le Consulat* would stress that if French businessmen could go to their country to seize lucrative contracts over the country's resources, the migrants were also entitled to go to France.

In his work on transnational Lebanese migration, Hage argues that 'a viable life presupposes a form of imaginary mobility, a sense that one is "going somewhere" – what I have called existential mobility' (2009: 97). Examining migrants' desires, aspirations and imaginaries allows for a better understanding of complex migratory journeys amongst sub-Saharan adventurers. Further, exploring migrants' own category of the 'objective' avoids the pitfalls of migration studies terms – such as transit; the idea of a fixed destination which would imply linear journeys is thus not reified. Yet, the gap between, on the one hand, migrants' desires and imaginations and, on the other hand, life within the dilapidated ghettoes described in Chapter 2, seems highly incongruous. In the next section, I examine the contradiction between migrants' articulation of epic journeys and the boredom and waiting inherent in their everyday life in Taqaddoum. Furthermore, I draw on Vigh's articulation of 'navigation' (2009) to explore migrants' changing imaginaries and migratory journeys.

Waiting and navigating

The quest for a better life entailed hardship and often violent ordeals, especially in the borderlands. Sub-Saharan migrants called the attempts (*tentatives*) to cross the fences and the sea into the Spanish enclaves and mainland (which they referred to as *Grande Espagne*) *le choc* (shock) or *choquement*, a neologism commonly used by adventurers, which has no equivalent in standard French. The wounds acquired during the attempts testified to the violence involved (Fig. 47 in Chapter 3).

In Taqaddoum, I listened to many accounts of attempted crossings. Perez recalled the first time he went to Nador with other migrants from *Le Consulat*. They walked towards the forests of Gourougou and Mawari at night to avoid detection by/evade the police. As they were joined by other small groups of migrants, their numbers rose to over fifty. At 6am, they set up one last '*tranquillo*' to stay hidden and rest after the arduous nocturnal march.[67]

> Some people went ahead to scout [*cibler*, literally 'to target'], to check the barrier, to see whether there were military men. We call them scouts [*cibleurs*, literally 'targeters']. It was fine. We waited an hour to go on the battlefield. We crawled. It is a battle, you go against military men, you are without weapons, you rush to reach over the fence. They throw stones at you. We got spotted fifty metres before the military fence. There was a guide with us, who was saying step by step what we should do. He was also in the group to pass [the fence]. He shouted to give us the signal to go for the fence.

Perez and his friends had no ladders or gloves to climb the three razor-wire-topped fences 'protecting' the Spanish enclave of Melilla. Yet, many made it to the Spanish side but they could not reach the *campo*.[68] Apart from a few who escaped, they were all arrested by the *Guardia Civil*, handcuffed and beaten before being *refouled*, in breach of Spain's national and international obligations, to the Moroccan side where they were beaten again with sticks and iron bars. At least one Cameroonian died during that attempt. Perez only suffered a very bad cut while climbing the fence: 'It's then that I understood why [other migrants] said [the crossing] was dangerous. […] There are no witnesses. If you do not make it to the fence, you are hit even more by the Moroccans, I was told I had to make it at all costs.' Most of the migrants, including

[67] As described in Chapter 2 this is a Spanish-sounding word migrants used to designate the temporary, makeshift camps they established on their way to make an 'attempt'.
[68] Nickname given to the Spanish Identification Centre in Melilla.

some the wounded, were left hungry and exhausted outside Oujda. They had to walk back to the university where some informal camps are located: 'It was my first *refoulement*,' Perez said.

Rather than the violence perpetrated by Moroccan and Spanish authorities, I want to highlight the lexicon ('battlefield', 'attacks') employed by adventurers. In her discussion of adventure in sub-Saharan Africa, Bredeloup notes the importance of the motif of *épopée* within 'imaginaries of adventure' (2008: 293) as 'central African lands are turned into territories where peasants' sons can be elevated to the rank of "hero"' (2008: 295).[69] She notes that adventure presupposes temerity, bravery and pride (*ibid*). Amongst my sub-Saharan informants, there was a clear discursive element of heroism in their epic descriptions of migrants' 'quests' (*quêtes*): crawling in the forests, making tactical plans and uneven fighting with authorities. Many, especially younger ones, joked that they were 'bandits', illustrating 'contestation' which Bredeloup identifies as another prominent register amongst 'imaginaries of migration' (2008: 293). Stressing that they were '*clandestins*', migrants sometimes ascribed positive value to 'illegality', depicting themselves as cunning and courageous, always ready to pick up their bags. 'We will fight' (*on va se battre*) was a common injunction referring to the everyday struggle beyond tales of crossing borders. Perez would describe himself as a 'rebel' and many of my informants called themselves 'soldiers'. When I asked someone in *L'Embassade* what they were soldiers against, he replied 'we are soldiers against life.'

[69] My translation.

Fig. 53 Looking outside from a room in Maadid.

However, migrants' epic tales were recalled to me in Taqaddoum because they had failed to cross the border. Throughout fieldwork, I had the contradictory impression that my informants were constantly moving and yet remained still. '*Le Maroc nous gére*' (Morocco manages us) was a phrase I often heard, with 'Morocco' sometimes substituted by the word '*terrain'*. Recalling how he set off to go on the adventure, Chimita explained to me in *L'Embassade* that his girlfriend had tried to galvanise him by calling him a lion. Both bemused and saddened, he jokingly exclaimed, 'A lion! But if I am a lion, the *terrain* is a dragon'. In *L'Embassade,* Cameroonian migrants proudly recalled how Moroccans who had befriended them in Nador told them that sub-Saharans travelled extensively and knew more about Morocco than Moroccans. Yet, this story was recalled by migrants who were often reluctant to go beyond *château* or go into the city centre (Fig. 53). Adventurers' (im)mobility seemed to involve relative stasis in Taqaddoum punctuated by hectic movements outside (both attempts and deportations). Indeed, it is crucial to contrast Perez' recalling of a failed crossing attempt with Sheller and Urry's observation that 'all the world seems to be on the move' (2006: 207). As discussed in the Introduction, the 'mobility turn' needs to account for the formation, regulation and unequal distribution of mobility (Salazar and Smart 2011: v).

Adventurers constantly talked about moving, but they could be stuck in Taqaddoum for several months if they lacked the necessary resources such as health and money. Yet, movement was constantly talked about. Whilst eating *beignets* in Dinar's restaurant, the regular customers and I were distractedly watching a programme about a millionaire putting young female candidates to the test before choosing whom to marry. One activity involved going with him on a jet ski. My neighbour on the worn-out sofa placidly mused:

> with one of those, I would go straight on to *Grande Espagne*, *nishan* ['straight' in Moroccan Arabic]. I would just speed over the sea. I would not even stop at the shore; this kind of engine would carry me over land for at least two-hundred metres. Then, I would jump off and rush though the forest. The *Guardia* would never have time to catch me and send me back.

Some nodded, most people laughed. We disregarded the rest of the programme to argue over how much a jet ski really would carry someone overland on a sandy beach.

Rather than transit, Collyer uses the term 'stranded' (2010) to account for how sub-Saharan migrants, with heterogeneous circumstances, find themselves in similar living conditions and spaces within Morocco, unable to either travel further, return or remain and obtain a legal status in Morocco. However, as the term 'stranded' seems to leave little room for migrants' agency, I prefer, following Núñez and Heyman, to speak in terms of

> 'processes of entrapment', in which police and other state agencies impose significant risk on movement of undocumented people, while these people exercise various forms of agency by both forgoing travel and covertly defying movement controls. In this perspective, people are not so much absolutely nailed to the ground as they are partially and complexly impacted by the movement control system (2007: 354).

Indeed, adventurers were not 'nailed to the ground'. Although it was not easy, they were regularly leaving for the borderlands to attempt crossing. They would also occasionally visit other cities for employment purposes. As Schapendonk puts it, 'the waiting of "transit migrants", which is often seen as a status of immobility, is not necessarily fixated [*sic*] in space' (2012: 581). Aron, who shared a room with Lamine and a few more Burkinabe, went back and forth between Taqaddoum and Maghnia in Algeria whenever his contacts there had work for him. He boasted he had never been

caught crossing the border. However, whenever he was bored with watching TV at home and went out for a walk, his stroll invariably stopped on the edge of the neighbourhood: from *château* to main street – and the market. He would not go further for fear of being picked up by the police. Whilst some of my informants were eager to have a break and go to the city centre with me or to the beach outside Rabat (Fig. 54), many were too scared to leave Taqaddoum if it was not necessary for work. After being assaulted, Patrick even hesitated going to the other side of Douar Hajja with me.

Fig. 54 At the beach outside Rabat.

Circulating between Rabat and the borderlands was also tricky. Passport checks in bus and train stations targeting sub-Saharans were common, especially around Oujda and Nador. Following *refoulement* at the Algerian border, migrants willing to return to Rabat often had to walk towards stations away from Oujda to hide in trains. Meeting Perez who had returned from yet another attempt, I found him exhausted in *Le Consulat*. He explained that after deportation he was ambushed by the police before he could jump on the back of a train. He was caught twice in the same station and deported each time. The third time he was caught, he burst out in tears and begged to be released.

The policemen took pity and let him go. Perez had been luckier than Cameroonian Cyriaque who had lost a leg in a similar incident (Fig. 55).

Fig. 55 Cyriaque in his Douar Hajja room.

Bringing carefully-concealed inflatable boats, wooden paddles and lifejackets to the borderlands involved a lot of organization. Eric William asked me to accompany him to the Camara bus station as he was in charge of buying fourteen tickets for a group of Cameroonians travelling with two zodiacs to Tangier. Usually migrants were brought to the back of the office and charged 150dh each. I went in to buy the tickets whilst Eric William waited outside. An employee charged me 70dh per ticket only and kindly showed me around the station to explain where the bus would be in the evening. When I presented Eric William with the tickets and half of the money, he was happy but infuriated by the scam he had been subjected to so far.

It was not until Eric William rang me back that night that I realized how naïve such a bold move had been. Eric William explained the employee expected 'fourteen white students of Arabic […] and not *clandestins*' and did not let them get on the bus, which eventually left almost empty, save for a few Moroccans and a couple of Malians whom Eric William said had arrived before and spoke no French. He assumed they had been ripped off even more than he and his companions usually were. Eventually, the migrants negotiated a middle ground and took the bus the following day. However,

they returned shortly after because the 'conditions' were not right and they would rather wait longer than risk getting caught and having the material confiscated.[70] Although this element did not have a prominent place in epic discourses about migrants' adventures, there was much waiting involved.

Hage argues that 'the societal and historical conditions of permanent crisis we live in have led to a proliferation and intensification of [a] sense of "stuckedness"' (2009: 97). Analysing the reactions surrounding the unexpected survival of one man in the midst of a natural disaster in Australia, Hage notes that 'to be a hero under such circumstances is to be resilient enough to […] *wait out* your stuckedness' (2009: 100). Whilst pointing out that survivors snatch 'agency over the very fact that one has no agency by not succumbing and becoming a mere victim' (2009: 101), he argues that 'heroism of the stuck heralds a celebration and organisation of waiting in times of crisis. It signals a conservative governmentality that aims at de-legitimising impatience and the desire to disrupt "the queue" even in the face of disaster' (2009: 7).

Adventurers refused to 'wait out' the crisis. Their urge was not 'to keep calm and carry on' but, in their own words, 'to jump barriers'. As Hage puts it, 'it is civilised to know how to endure a crisis and act in an orderly, self-governed, restrained fashion. It is the uncivilised "third world–looking masses" that are imagined to be running amok in the face of crisis' (2009: 105). For instance, Rotter points to 'a persistent assumption […] evident in media and political rhetoric in some countries, that refugees are people who must – or should – "wait their turn". Recently, this has taken the form of describing asylum seekers as "queue jumpers"' (2010). African youths today, according to Honwana, are 'grappling with a lack of jobs and deficient education. After they leave school with few skills, they are unable to obtain work and become independent – to build, buy or rent a house for themselves, support their relatives, get married, establish families and gain social recognition as adults' (2014: 19). Rather than 'waiting out' this difficult period of transition between childhood and adulthood which Honwana qualifies as 'waithood' (2014), adventurers refuse a 'life within limits' (Jackson 2011), they prefer to exit (*sortir*) and to shock (*choquer*).

[70] Migrants often explained that confiscated material (sometimes even if damaged) would often be sold by corrupt members of the forces to other Moroccans and then be bought by other sub-Saharan migrants.

Fig. 56 Migrants who did not find work for the day playing draughts.

Yet, migrants were always waiting for something: a phone call from a Moroccan contact to get work, a Western Union transfer from relatives, news from friends in the borderlands, a medical appointment at an NGO, etc. In contrast with their epic tales, they were also very bored. In *L'Embassade*, my greetings and small talk attempts were usually met with a taciturn and gloomy answer: '*la routine'*. In fact, brief, daily exchanges between migrants on the streets of Taqaddoum often illustrated pervasive monotony (Fig. 56). Whenever Lamine and I were out and about in Taqaddoum and he would stop to greet another migrant, we would share a joke about the repetitiveness of their dialogues, invariably punctuated by exclamations such as 'really, Morocco is hard!' Routine exchanges mirrored routine everyday lives. Migrants complained days were the same and that there were few distractions save for TV and the occasional football game when people had enough food and energy. Sat inside the ghettoes, or outside whenever safe to do so, migrants would 'waste time' (*perdre le temps*). A lot of time was spent discussing how boring life was in Taqaddoum. Every late afternoon outside *Le Consulat*, migrants had the same discussion about whether Yaounde or Abidjan had the best ambiance. They generally agreed both were better than Taqaddoum.

Fig. 57 A zodiac's box in a Malian ghetto.

In his study of the 'whites of South Africa' in the period leading to the end of apartheid, Crapanzano describes their waiting as a 'passive activity' marked by 'contingency and anxiety which produces […] feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability' (1986: 44). It is a kind of 'lingering' which leads to 'paralysis' (ibid). In contrast, Corcoran asserts that 'the point is this: waiting is doing something. […] The word itself suggests strong and purposive action: to keep watch, to lie in wait, to stalk a prey, to take by surprise. Its connotations are preparedness, stealth, and seeking advantage' (1989: 517). Here, I concur with Rotter in moving away from such dichotomies. In her study of waiting amongst asylum-seekers in Glasgow, she argues for 'an understanding of the duality of waiting' (2010: 261). Hence, she notes that

> although associated with a sense of stagnation as in the traditional formulation of waiting, people's lives were nevertheless filled with highly productive activities, such as learning English, studying courses at college, reproducing and caring for families, contributing to political struggles in the country of origin, lobbying the British government, attempting to change service delivery and public opinion, and working on asylum cases (*ibid*).

Fig. 58 Cameroonian migrant trying on a lifejacket before packing it.

Adventurers were both passively and actively waiting. They would spend a lot of time getting ready, looking for necessary material for the attempts (e.g., zodiacs, paddles, safety jackets) (See Figs. 57-58-59). Ghettoes were the loci of important discussions where migrants exchanged information about tactics to adopt in the forests. They also kept in regular contact via mobile phones and internet with friends who could update them on the current situation. They would even check the maritime weather forecast to decide on what day it would be best to cross to mainland Spain depending on the height of waves and strength of wind. For obvious reasons of confidentiality, I am not going to detail here information regarding those tactics. I want to stress that despite boredom and idleness, migrants were also active. For instance, in Chapter 1, I examined the issue of political activism amongst adventurers in Taqaddoum. Further, Chapter 6 details how migrants sought employment opportunities and even set up their own businesses.

Fig. 59 Wooden paddles crafted by a Guinean carpenter are wrapped up in *L'Embassade*.

I recurrently witnessed a scene in Taqaddoum which demonstrates the ambiguity of waiting. Police raids near *château* were common. In the morning, I would sometimes find the square where migrants gathered to wait for jobs deserted, following the arrival of police vans. Walking down the avenue towards Douar Hajja, I would come across some of my informants standing alone, or in small groups, at a safe distance, often leaning against the lampposts. They were keeping watch on what was going on in *château* and looking behind in case a police van turned up the other way. They were making quick decisions in accordance with the changing situation: to return to *château* if the police cleared off, walk back home if the protracted situation did not end, or quickly disappear in the nearby maze of alleyways if they spotted evidence of an impending second police raid.

This flexibility in quickly reacting to changing circumstances was apparent in most of adventurers' endeavours. As displayed in Lamine's story in the introduction to this chapter, migrants' quest for a better life required constant attention and preparedness for uncertain and volatile circumstances. Adventurers referred to this process as '*débrouillardise*' (resourcefulness). The verb *se débrouiller* means to disentangle (literally to un-fog) oneself, to make-do. In his discussion of social

navigation, Vigh notes the parallel between *se débrouiller* and the Creole term *dubriagem*, pointing to constant monitoring and scrutinizing of one's uncertain surroundings in Guinea-Bissau. As he puts it,

> seeing one's life or future through the act of *dubria* thus allows one to gain a perspective on which way the social environment is moving and how this movement influences one's course towards both the near and distant future. It designates the ability to envision one's way through emergent and volatile socio-political circumstances as well as being the actual practice of doing so (2009: 424).

Similarly, in Taqaddoum, migrants were constantly talking about monitoring the '*terrain*', paying very close attention to developments in the borderlands (via mobile-phone contact with other migrants) as well as in the neighbourhood itself (e.g., to keep track of work opportunities as well as police movement), but also in Europe and their home country when it came to political developments which could affect them. One had to stay vigilant, otherwise the terrain would manage the migrants (*le terrain nous gère*).

As Vigh has it, 'we act, adjust and attune our strategies and tactics in relation to the way we experience and imagine and anticipate the movement and influence of social forces. […] Social navigation designates the practice of moving within a moving environment' (2009: 420-5). Sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum 'looking for the objective' were simultaneously attending to their more pressing needs and keeping their eyes open for better opportunities to reach that 'more bearable life'. They were navigating: they were 'always in the process of feeling [their] way through the immediate convulsions of a fluid environment whilst simultaneously trying to gain an overview and make [their] way toward a point in or beyond the horizon' (2009: 430). In *L'Embassade*, where my Cameroonian informants enjoyed footballing metaphors, migrants sometimes talked of the need to have good '*jeu de jambe*' (footwork).

Being alert also entails paying attention to other migrants' experiences and imaginations as discussed above. It is important to stress that their imaginations and desires, discussed in the previous section, are not static as they influenced and were influenced by one another. As Zournazi puts it, 'reflections, conversations and dialogues build new social and individual *imaginaries*' (2002: 12). As mentioned above, Sylvin explained that 'it was not my idea to go to Europe'. Furthermore,

adventurers, 'looking for their lives', followed their aspirations and imaginations towards an 'outside' (*dehors*) which remained elusive. Indeed, 'realities of the terrain' (*les réalités du terrain*) did not always live up to migrants' expectations. I want to stress here again that my informants usually did not talk of fixed destinations, unless I had myself used the word. Furthermore, the 'objective' of looking for one's life and better opportunities was not always strictly associated with Europe: my informants also clarified that the objective could be fulfilled somewhere else. Shortly before crossing to Spain, Sylvin told me, 'What I look for is not only Europe, it is to be comfortable (*être à l'aise*), even in a poor country. If there is an opportunity in media, access to the internet to do some radio, I will be comfortable.' Similarly, whilst busy making preparations for his attempts in the borderlands, Stéphane often explained that given 'the right conditions', he would be happy to stay in Morocco and stop trying to cross to Europe.

The 'objective' of sub-Saharan adventurers, like 'navigating', 'is not just a question of drawing a line between two points on a map: the movement of the social environment influences our very endeavour. It destabilises our coordinates and changes the map as we move along' (Vigh 2009: 432). This is further illustrated by the introductory vignette and the range of opportunities and places Lamine would simultaneously consider, trying to gauge what was best. Vigh asserts that 'social navigation does not characterize a mechanical practice toward a goal [as] power of movement is situationally defined' (2009: 432). Yet, adventurers' articulation of the 'objective' nevertheless pointed towards somewhere or something: an 'outside' where life would be 'more bearable'. It could be Europe where migrants' imaginaries were often anchored, but it could also be realised elsewhere. When I spoke to Lamine shortly after he reached Saudi Arabia, I teased him by asking what had happened to his objective now that he had left Morocco. Rather than saying he had abandoned it, he answered that he would now 'start another goal [*un but*]'. Lamine was trying to improve his living condition and was gauging the terrain in Saudi Arabia while still thinking of ways to reach even better opportunities in Europe, or somewhere else.

Conclusion

Exploring migrants' imaginaries, desires and aspirations reveals some of the pitfalls associated with the migration studies' concept of 'transit'. As described above, irregular, sub-Saharan migrants who had reached Morocco after tortuous and fragmented journeys described themselves as 'adventurers' looking for 'the objective', which they often defined as 'looking for one's self' and reaching a better life. Examining migrants' self-representation and their own idioms illustrates the fallacy of a fixed destination. Rather than passively wait, migrants 'navigate' a shifting terrain, first marked by Moroccan and European authorities trying to prevent them from crossing (see Introduction and Chapter 4). Their imaginaries shifted in the face of the 'realities of the terrain' as expectations were not fulfilled along migratory routes, thus migrants changed direction numerous times before reaching Morocco. Further, although sub-Saharan migrants' multiple aspirations, as illustrated by Lamine in the introductory vignette, seemed contradictory, they illustrate the flexibility of an 'objective' which, if still closely associated with Europe for most of my informants, pointed less to a specific place than an aspired condition where they could realise themselves. In fact, further illustrating Taqaddoum's potential to become a different place (see Chapter 2's discussion of resilience and transformation), some of my informants often pointed out that they could reach their 'objective' in Morocco, if only the 'conditions' were right.

Although I argue here that examining migrants' own idioms is crucial to explore their imaginaries and aspirations, I am not suggesting reifying them as analytical categories. Sub-Saharan migrants themselves, as discussed above, illustrated the gap between self-representation as 'adventurers' within epic tales of border-crossing attempts and the boredom of their everyday lives in Taqaddoum. Chapter 7, in exploring the second element in my informants' description of adventure, namely 'suffering', returns to some ethical dilemmas stemming from the gap between migrants' self-portrayal and the 'realities of the terrain' for them in Morocco. In Chapter 5, I examine hope and 'madness' in the face of adventurers' uncertainty in trying to reach their 'objective'. As illustrated above, 'navigating' a shifting terrain entails the twin-possibility for migrants of either succeeding or failing to cross the border to Spain. Migrants discussed this in terms of '*chance*'.

Chapter 5 Hope and uncertainty

‘What are *you* going to do with women anyway?’ Aron teased his roommate Lamine. The three of us were sitting on the two small mattresses in their bedroom, watching TV, a few days before Lamine decided to leave Morocco. They were talking about Moroccan women and mocking each other. On the screen, one of the main Moroccan channels was airing a Mexican soap-opera, dubbed in Moroccan Arabic, which Aron had been assiduously following over the past weeks, especially since he had not secured any work for a while. Every now and then, Lamine would half-heartedly provide a vague summary of what was going on in French, although Aron, who spoke no Arabic, seemed to have little trouble in understanding the plot revolving around a stolen stash of money and an unfaithful married couple.

‘Look at those *clochards* [tramps] there,’ Aron said sarcastically, pointing at the TV when his favourite programme ended and the midday news broadcast started. The first piece of news focused on Moroccan emigrants returning from Spain because of the euro crisis and unemployment. Recently, there had been several headlines in Moroccan media about returning Moroccan migrants (Yabiladi 29-06-2012) as well as Spanish men working irregularly on construction sites around Tangier (Yabiladi 21-05-2012). ‘What are you going to do in Morocco?’ Aron questioned the returnees driving out of Tangier’s harbour with loaded cars. ‘There is no work here. Mohamed VI needs to fasten his seatbelt,’ he giggled. I asked Aron what this meant for sub-Saharans trying to cross to Europe. ‘We are not the same as the Moroccans. We are not the same colour. They return from the crisis. For us, it will work out,’ he replied. I asked whether he really thought so. ‘I hope so,’ he simply replied still staring at the returning Moroccan families on the screen. Uninterested by the next news item, Aron turned to Lamine to resume their usual banter, this time telling him off for washing himself with *Omo* washing powder instead of soap because it was cheaper.

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, hope is not evenly distributed (Zournazi and Hage 2002). Often contrasting their situation with mine or that of ‘Europeans’ in general, adventurers in Taqaddoum repeatedly stressed that they had ‘to shock’ in order to seize what they vaguely referred to as their ‘*pourcentage’* (literally ‘percentage’, that is ‘their share’). Like Aron, adventurers were bored in

Taqaddoum, which they often described as 'hell' or 'a prison' (see Chapter 4); they were longing 'for some deliverance which would bring [their] trial to an end' (Marcel 1951: 30). Often, despite a lack of tangible evidence in the face of uncertainty, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum were hopeful and asserted positively that their present ordeal in Morocco would change. Contrasting hope and expectation, Lingis argues that 'hope is *always* hope against the evidence' (Zournazi and Lingis 2002: 23-4). The importance of hope in migrants' quest for a better life is illustrated by the refrain in a poem, entitled '*Espoir*' (Hope), by Houdou, a Cameroonian migrant who spent a lot of time in *L'Embassade* writing poetry and songs:

Tomorrow, why not believe
Tomorrow, why ever doubt
Tomorrow, might there be glory
Tomorrow, might there be love [71]

In this chapter, I examine how sub-Saharan migrants coped with uncertainty. The border-crossing expeditions were described by my informants as 'attempts' (*tentatives*) precisely because they could not be sure whether they would succeed in crossing the fences or the sea across to Spain, although they left Taqaddoum full of hope. This chapter asks how sub-Saharan migrants, despite the epic tales they recalled (see Chapter 4), made sense of their contrived agency in the face of a 'migration apparatus' (Feldman 2012) erected to prevent them from crossing into Europe, a crossing which was often discussed as essential in realising their 'objective'. Firstly, in discussing adventurers' articulation of '*chance*', I explore how migrants remained hopeful by stressing the necessary interplay of courage, strength and luck, hereby acknowledging their agency and its limits. However, such balance is fragile, and in the second part of this chapter I explore what my informants described as 'becoming mad' (*devenir fou*), a state of despair they constantly needed to fight, following their violent ordeal in Morocco.

'Looking for chance'

Drawing on Pontamianou (1997), Hage introduces the concept of 'hope on the side of life' (see Chapter 3), which he contrasts with hope 'against life' (Hage 2003). Whilst

[71] My translation. A full version of the poem is available in Bachelet (2014).

the latter is associated with deferred gratification and is 'a kind of hope which breeds passivity' (Hage 2003: 12), the former is about engagement; it is 'like a bodily principle of hope, which drives us to continue to want to live, no matter what' (Zournazi and Hage 2002: 151). Similarly, although he takes pains to distance himself from Zournazi and Hage, Zigon moves beyond an active-passive dichotomy in his discussion of 'hope'. Furthermore, he refutes the idea of hope as only a future-oriented concept. According to him, hope is 'primarily aimed at the perseverance of a sane life' (2009: 258). Discussing hope amongst his informants in Moscow, Zigon identifies two aspects: 'hope as the temporal structure of the background attitude that allows for living a sane life in a specific social world; and hope as the temporal orientation of intentional and reflective ethical action that becomes necessary in moments of moral breakdown' (2009: 267). Drawing on Badiou's depiction of hope as perseverance – the need to 'keep going! [*Continuer*!]' (2001: 52) and his own discussion of 'moral breakdown' (2007), Zigon claims that 'through active hoping one is able to return safely to the world of persevering hope' (2009: 268).

In the case of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants attempting to leave Taqaddoum to cross the border, Zigon's definition of hope as being ultimately aimed at a return to 'a persevering hope' does not fit. My sub-Saharan informants were not hoping to return to an unreflective, persevering state found in Taqaddoum or their home countries. They wanted to be comfortable ('*à l'aise*') and were not striving to return to some sort of *status quo*. However, Zigon's claim that hope is not exclusively future-oriented is relevant here. Hope, for my informants in Taqaddoum, was no more future-oriented than it was focused on their present conditions.

As further discussed in Chapter 7, adventure for migrants implied 'enduring suffering'. Migrants' discussions of hope were not simply projected towards the distant realisation of their 'objective', as hope was necessary to bear everyday difficulties and hardship in Morocco. Also, sub-Saharan migrants would often stress that crossing to Europe would not necessarily entail the end of hardship; the last line in Houdou's poem, which depicts the overcoming of obstacles to reach Europe, ends with 'the struggle continues' (Bachelet 2014b), thus illustrating that migrants expected to continue needing hope once in Europe. Their imaginaries of Europe (see Chapter 4) were also fed by the reports of migrants who had already crossed and did not deceive

those still in Morocco with utopian tales of an easy, carefree life; instead, they provided more honest accounts of the 'realities' of hardship for irregular migrants in Europe who should expect to 'keep fighting'. Some sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum who had been deported from Spain and France, and so were undertaking the journey again, provided information about working conditions in those countries.

Furthermore, as explored throughout this thesis, adventurers' quest 'to find or establish secure places that may serve as bases for developing a future' (Jansen and Löving 2008: 17) could, potentially, be realised in Taqaddoum itself, rather than in another distant (both temporally and spatially) locus for their hopeful 'objective'. For instance, as explored in Chapter 2, migrants' ghettoes were replaced by smaller accommodations, which they were nevertheless hesitant to call homes. Also, as examined in Chapter 1, their political activities in Taqaddoum were aimed at improving their living conditions in the hope of maybe settling in Morocco.

'We live in hazard (*hasard*),' Souleyman told me in his room, the same one previously occupied by Lamine and his roommates who were all gone by then. Still hanging on the wall was a poster featuring Lamine from the theatre event we took part in together. Souleyman, having been asked by me what he meant, explained as follows:

> Let me tell you a story. There was a Moroccan woman working for the secretary of the King. She saw a black man and wanted him. […] The man was married back home and did not want to cheat on his wife. But he did not tell the Moroccan woman. He let her linger [*tourner*]. She gave him money, but he was not really responding to her. […] She started screaming, 'be careful not to find yourself near me or there will be trouble'. Now, he regrets it. We, blacks, never know what we should take or leave, we live in hazard. […] We have no fixed directions; we do not have one option [only]. There are people who want to become professor of philosophy and they just go for that. Here, there is no such thing in Douar Hajja. We have a lot of options. You can go in any direction. You meet someone here and he tells you he will stay two months, but two days after you have seen him, he is in the forest and he tells you he is going somewhere else.

Although I shared Souleyman's observation that in Taqaddoum migrants could be unpredictable and leave from one day to another despite having planned otherwise, I was initially puzzled by his assertion that migrants had too many options. Yet, although their mobility was obviously obstructed, sub-Saharans had a myriad of

decisions and choices to make. As Dwyer has it, 'agency […] is the capacity, within the context of existing systems of relations, to act on the world rather than merely in the world. […] Agency, then, is a universal human capacity to choose how and when to act' (2009: 23). Although opportunities were constrained in Morocco, migrants obviously made constant decisions. They could decide to go to the borderlands immediately, or wait another week. They could look for work early in the morning or go later on. They could go to several different locations around the Spanish enclaves and set up a *tranquilo*. Migrants were aware that each tiny decision they made could affect their 'quest for the objective'. Whenever the theatre workshop Lamine, Youssef and I attended was running, Lamine would spend a long time wondering whether he should attend the workshop, look for work or go to Caritas instead. He would ponder over what 'advantages' he was likely to get from each activity.

Nevertheless, the outcome of sub-Saharan migrants' choices and actions was obviously contingent upon more than their decision-making. According to Crapanzano (2004: 100), the realisation of hope always depends on something else, such as God, fate, chance or other actors. Although 'something else' plays a part, Crapanzano's conception of hope entails both passivity and resignation. In contrast, I argue that for migrants in Taqaddoum the realisation of hope was achieved through active and persistent engagement (discussed in terms of *courage* and *force* [strength]) whilst simultaneously recognizing the limits of their agency (described as *chance*). As migrants in Taqaddoum 'navigated' (Vigh 2009) through uncertainty, each single decision, however seemingly insignificant, could make a difference in the success (or failure) of the quest.

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, I concur with Cooper and Pratten who argue against conceiving of uncertainty solely in a negative and constraining sense. They assert that 'uncertainty is a social resource and can be used to negotiate insecurity, conduct and create relationships, and act as a source of imagining the future with the hopes and fears this entails. […] Uncertainty is productive' (2015: 2). Di Nunzio's ethnographic study of hustlers in Addis Ababa also illustrates how uncertainty can be conceived as 'ground for action' (Di Nunzio 2015: 149). Looking at similar anthropological issues through the concept of doubt, Pelkmans points out that 'doubt does not exclusively point to ontological and epistemological referents, to

the questions "what is?" and "what is true?" Lived doubt points also (and sometimes more pressingly) to pragmatic referents, to the question "what to do?"' (2013: 2).

Fig. 60 Betting on football games in *L'Embassade*.

Migrants did not know for sure which route would be successful, and talked of '*tenter la chance*' (taking a chance). Getting up in the morning and being able to find a job for the day or not was a matter of '*chance'*; crossing the fence in Melilla or not was governed by '*chance'*. In *L'Embassade*, many Cameroonian migrants spent time and money playing football lottery (Fig. 60). Winning or losing too was a matter of *'chance*'. As argued by da Col and Humphrey, 'the quasi-event of luck does not provide certainty but rather constructs a fertile universe of doubts' (2012: 2). Here, I wish to explore how *chance*, as it was articulated by my sub-Saharan informants, pointed to a fine balance between contingency and their ability to act;[72] acknowledging and sustaining such fragile balance was crucial to keep hoping and not 'become mad'.

Although migrants' use of *chance* was usually more akin to 'luck' in English, some of my sub-Saharan informants, Christian as well as Muslims, sometimes associated the idea of *chance* with that of 'destiny', stressing that ultimately it was God who provided *chance*.[73] When I asked Perez if he asked God to give him *chance*,

[72] Henceforth, I will retain the italicized term used by my informants and drop the inverted commas for ease of reading.
[73] In French, *chance* translates for both the English terms of 'chance' and 'luck'.

he replied, 'I pray for God to give me a sign, not to give me *chance*. I cannot change my destiny'. *Chance* could be 'attempted' (*tentée*) but not known or imposed by force. 'God is strength' (*C'est Dieu la force*) was a common encouragement in Taqaddoum, routinely used to say goodbye. I often heard people joke that adventure brought people closer to God, that some who had never thought about religion suddenly became devout Muslims or Christians. On the other hand, some Muslim informants explained that their faith in God diminished in the face of their lack of *chance*. Perez simply asserted that he was 'spiritual', sometimes wishing to become Muslim like his grand-dad, or Rastafarian like his brother, but mostly he would recall fond memories of his tongue-in-cheek, atheist dad who always teased Perez' Christian mother.

I accompanied Lamine on his visit to Abderhamid, a Muslim Malian who had been beaten by the Moroccan auxiliary forces in the borderlands and was convalescing in a Malian ghetto. Most migrants spoke Bambara only and Lamine sporadically translated. Sat on a mat, Abderhamid was holding his rosary and praying. Once finished, he told us that if one prays and gives charity, nothing wrong can happen to him and God would protect him. I asked Lamine to inquire about their views on *chance* and crossing. One of the Malians told a story about a group of Malians who had 'prepared themselves very well before leaving for Morocco'. He explained that the father of one of the migrants provided them with 'powerful medicine' and warned them to 'go to the gate [of the fence] and walk *nishan* [straight, in Moroccan Arabic], but do not look behind you'. The four friends went to the gate and did as they had been told. All but one, who had looked behind, crossed and reached the Spanish side.

I asked Lamine to enquire whether it was simply God who would grant safe passage. They talked and laughed for a while until Lamine eventually translated the following story about a Guinea migrant recalled by another of the Malians. The man prayed twice to God to let him enter Spain. He prayed first before approaching one of the fence's gates. He went ahead and found the gate was not guarded, so 'he decided to pray again and kneeled down next to the fence's gate. While he was praying, the police came over and tapped his shoulder: "if you are finished praying now we are just going to send you back to the other side of the fence"' .

When I asked Eric William a similar question, he gave me a perplexed look and told me matter-of-factly, 'You don't just wait in bed here until God picks you up

and nicely deposits you on the other side of the barrier'. This is similar to the Russian proverb mentioned by Zigon: 'you can put your hopes in God, but you still have to act' (2009: 259). In his discussion of 'luck' amongst Guinean hustlers, Gaibazzi argues that human existence is informed by what he calls 'a kinetic notion of destiny […], whereby the idea of a predetermined, personalized fate largely operating beyond human cognition demands that they find their route' (2015: 239). Without completely mastering it, men must serendipitously explore the space of potentialities presented by God.

For migrants, *chance* was simultaneously the explanation for past attempts, providing an explanation, *a posteriori*, for success and failure, as well as a hopeful encouragement for future attempts. As da Col and Humphrey have it, fortune and luck are '"the quasi-events" of everyday life. A quasi-event is not an ordinary fact but a unique fact of the everyday, *one that forces a shift in attention toward what will happen next or toward what might have happened* – a mishap, an omen, a winning, a sign of hope' (2012: 2; original emphasis). In Taqaddoum, people who had attempted to cross the border and failed were the recipient of other fellow migrants' confident reassurances: 'it was not your time. You are not dead. Next time will be the right one'. However, a future attempt, though understood as *chance* too, was usually not the subject of any *a priori* prognosis or explanation. When pushing for a definition of *chance* with Perez and Bangal, I was told that three was the right number of 'attempts'. Though he had tried many more times, Perez told me, 'Every man has the right to three chances'. Bangal too, when pressed to discuss chance and future attempts told me that one could only attempt three times and then ought to stop because one was not meant to pass. He had tried the fence at Melilla three times and was considering returning home as he had saved some money. Yet, a few weeks after we discussed this, he disappeared and I was told he had left for his fourth attempt. Some said he crossed, others that he was wounded and still in the forest.

Chance refers to migrants' constrained but nevertheless prevailing agency in their uncertain quest. This balance of uncertainty and agency prevailed in Perez' explanations when I asked him to clarify what *chance* meant for him:

> There is not one definition of chance as such. It is anything positive that can happen to you, without you even noticing. The adventurer plays on two fundamental levels: *chance*, as well as strength [*force*]

> and courage. It is a spiritual thing, you do not force *chance*, you are born with it. It is God who gives *chance*, who makes people enter into Europe. You can pass with strength or without. Strength, courage and chance are a combination together. At the end of your effort, your courage, lies the reward. That is a proverb from where I am from. You may have the courage but not be called to enter into Europe. Not everyone is called to enter into Europe, all of us here will not pass. […] You do not wait, you make your effort. *Chance* comes after, things fall together. You do not stay in Rabat, you go to try [*tenter*] your *chance*. It is God who gives chance, you do not force chance.

Feeling confused about the distinction between trying and forcing chance, or whether *chance* was more akin to destiny or luck, I asked again the day after. Perez said I did not understand anything, but he was patient:

> Hazard is when you do something without thinking about it, like a reflex. And if you try to think about it to do it then it does not happen. *Chance* is not like this. *Chance* is about doing something, reflecting on it. For the adventurer, strength and chance are the two fundamental points. Six Cameroonians and a Guinean came back from the fence because they saw it was blocked [by Moroccan military]. Upon returning they saw another group going for a *tentative*. They joined them and tried all together. The Cameroonians passed, the Guinean did not. That is *chance*. Some people get up at 6am to look for work and don't find it. Another one wakes at 1pm and arrives at *château*. He gets picked up for work by a Moroccan. What is it? *Chance*!

As Perez pointed, *chance* implied reflection, courage and strength; this was also referred to as 'the right mentality' by informants in Taqaddoum. It was an 'effort' to make amidst uncertainty. *Chance* was the 'something else' (Crapanzano 2004: 100) needed for the realisation of one's hopes. One did not simply wait for it in Rabat. To find out whether someone had *chance*, one had to keep 'making an attempt' (*tenter*), displaying strength, courage and reflection 'to tempt *chance*', until successful passage was granted.[74] Migrants left Taqaddoum saying, 'This time will be the right one for me' and came back saying, 'This was simply not my time. I will try again'.

Chance was a process that demanded careful planning from the migrants, not passive waiting (see Chapter 4), in order 'to reach one's objective'. Contrasting

[74] *Tenter* means both attempting/trying and tempting in French.

Weber's seminal work (1930) on protestant ethics and the idea of predestination with the attitudes of Gambian Soninke hustlers, Gaibazzi claims that for them 'it is precisely fate's indeterminacy and potential for auspicious change that encourage men to work and be enterprising' (2015: 239). However, here I want to stress that whilst uncertainty spurred action amongst adventurers, it was not without danger. Migrants discussed the need for strength, reflection and *chance*; however, such balance was difficult to sustain. As discussed above, *chance* could not be 'forced'. The dangers of what migrants referred to as 'thinking too much' (see Chapter 7) is illustrated by stories of newly-arrived migrants who found *chance* because they did not worry about it.

Whilst he was getting ready to leave with IOM, Maestro chatted with me about the forest near Nador where he had spent several months before coming back carrying one of Marmiton's kin on his back. Outside Marmiton's restaurant, Maestro recalled the suffering and the fear endured in the forest. He told me that newly arrived people in the forest were often fearless. They would pass; it was 'beginners' *chance*'. Contrary to those who had been there longer, they did not think about the danger of attempting to cross the fences. They were ignorant of the potential lethal wounds one could face. In contrast, sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum often explained that too much thinking could lead one 'to become mad [*fou*]'.

'Becoming mad'

As Zigon has it, 'hope is what we find when we might expect to find hopelessness – and as such, we always risk that slippage into hopelessness' (2009: 262). In Taqaddoum, some migrants were said to have 'forgotten the objective' and indulged in the little comfort they could find in Taqaddoum. Patrick had very harsh words against those who would stop looking for work in the morning, do nothing all day but beg a few dirham off others to eat, and spend the day watching TV, usually in the restaurants. French channel TV5 Monde's broadcasting of dubbed Mexican and Argentinian telenovelas was ironically considered as dangerous as the Moroccan police, for they made migrants 'sleep' and 'forget about the "objective."'

On the other hand, 'thinking too much' about one's 'objective', getting upset about failed opportunities, one's mistakes in decision-making, or the harsh living conditions in Morocco could lead migrants to despair. Sub-Saharans often talked of

being 'overwhelmed' or 'overtaken' (*être dépassé*) by problems, which they discussed as posing a real threat to 'becoming mad' (*devenir fou*).[75] On a February morning, Stéphane and I went to my usual café near *château*. He had recently come back from another failed attempt near Tangier where he explained he had been spotted by the Moroccan authorities posted in the 'watchtower'. During the ensuing scuffle and escape, he had injured his wrist. '*Le moral n'est pas là,'* (I am feeling low) he told me right away. Whilst discussing the first time he arrived in Taqaddoum, he recalled some of the decisions he made shortly after getting into *L'Embassade*. In Oujda, he had befriended two other Cameroonians and an Ivoirian with whom he left for Rabat. Shortly after having arrived, the other three quickly decided to get to Nador and attempt crossing the border. They invited Stéphane who, tired from a recent journey, declined the offer since he wanted to stay longer in Taqaddoum before making a move too. Shortly after, he received news that his three companions had managed to cross into the Spanish enclave of Melilla. 'Up until today, *ça me chauffe encore la tête'* (it still pains me), he said.[76]

In Taqaddoum, news about successful crossings often led many migrants to hasten their travelling plans. Migrants would often travel straight to the location of the previous successful crossing, somehow illogically since Moroccan and Spanish authorities often knew where the border's weak spot was. Trips to the borderlands were also spurred by rumours about breaches in border security. As Stewart and Strathern have it, rumours are 'deeply implicated in sequences of actions' (2004: ix). Highlighting how rumours can spur social action, they argue that 'rumours define and create worlds as much as "facts" do' (2004: 198).

The sharing of information related to successful crossings also drove many migrants to depression as they reflected over the events and decisions they took which led to them still being in Taqaddoum rather than amongst the successful people in Spain. I heard the expression '*chauffer la tête*' from Perez many times as he seemed to never find himself at the right place at the right moment when it came to crossing 'attempts'. During the 2012-13 winter, untypically for the season, many migrants rushed from Taqaddoum to the forests around Nador. Perez stayed there several weeks

[75] 'Becoming mad' was also something my Moroccan informants, especially Ali, mentioned whenever they would discuss their lives in Taqaddoum and the lack of opportunities in Morocco (see Chapter 3).
[76] Literally: 'it still makes my head hot.'

until the harsh weather and overall living conditions in the open air drove him, with the help of his friends and some Moroccan people, to leave. Slimmer and exhausted, he came back to Rabat. But by the time he got to Taqaddoum, his friends had passed to Melilla. He was depressed and inconsolable for some time.

Fig. 61 Smoking away one's problems in Maadid.

A few weeks after his return, as I made my way into *Le Consulat* early one Sunday morning to pick up Perez before going to the beach, I found him quiet, lying still on his mattress, his arms folded behind his head. He was very low and explained that at 5am a group of Ivoirians from the ghetto had rang to inform their friends they had all succeeded in crossing into Melilla without difficulties. 'It was a revolution here. We all got up, we could not sleep anymore. I just went to brush my teeth. I did not know what else to do,' he said, shaking his head. I often discussed such feelings of frustration with Perez and others as they reflected on the success and failure of their past decisions. Migrants in Taqaddoum had plenty of failed plans and other worries to ponder about. One of my informants would often just sit still in his room with a cigarette in his hands. 'I am smoking [away] my problems,' he would say (see Fig. 61).

During regular promenades in Taqaddoum with Aron, we invariably ended up, after having walked in a big loop, sitting on the big concrete slab near *château*,

smoking cigarettes whilst taking some sun and watching the bustle by the taxi rank. One day, a sub-Saharan young man, wearing a long coat and many other warm layers, sat next to us. He was staring right in front of him and started mumbling, sometimes looking at us. Aron occasionally nodded to him and finally just got up to leave. I followed him to enquire what the man had said. 'I don't know,' he laughed, 'he is mad, adventure makes some people mad'. Later on that day, I brought up the incident with Patrick in *L'Embassade*. He mentioned other sub-Saharan men who could be seen around in Taqaddoum during the day, eating from bins, walking about with dogs, talking to themselves, crossing in front of buses and seemingly not paying attention to others around them. Sitting next to us was a man getting a haircut from another Patrick, a hairdresser who went from ghetto to ghetto. He turned towards us and, commenting on the story I had just shared with them, laconically exclaimed, 'This is the adventure'.

'Becoming mad' was a serious worry for migrants. Failed attempts and difficult living conditions took a toll on them and drove some to alcohol and drugs. I discussed mental issues with Pierre-Marie from Caritas one day in January 2013 when he was also particularly low after a series of police raids in Rabat as well as numerous new arrivals of wounded migrants from the forests. He explained how in 2012 drastically reduced passages to Europe in the borderlands, the temporary closure of the IOM voluntary return programme and increased police raids in Rabat and other cities had left many migrants 'stuck in a vice [*étau*]. You cannot go North, you cannot go back, and you get beaten up here. People break down more quickly than they would normally do'. He said that in Caritas one per cent of the sub-Saharan migrants receiving help were schizophrenic: 'in 2012, we saw a lot of fragile people who could not take it anymore, who presented psychological and psychiatric problems. A kid was deported three times in a week, the second time he got raped. Before he was, let's say, all right, but after that the situation was completely shit.' Pierre-Marie explained that the difficult context increased mental health issues for migrants, and that psychological issues could trigger dormant psychiatric problems:

> people are lost, they ask themselves questions and it becomes obsessional, it can lead to depression and then maybe trigger a psychiatric issue. They keep harping on the same questions, you see them, especially teenagers they come and ask you 'what if I do not get my UNHCR papers, does it mean that…?' and the day after they come again and ask you, every day.

Migrants sometimes made a distinction between those who had 'forgotten about the objective' and those who had 'become mad' because they 'thought too much about the objective', but both marked mental health issues related to a feeling of entrapment in Morocco. A report by MSF (2013), *Violence, Vulnerability and Migration: Trapped at the Gates of Europe*, demonstrates that 'the precarious living conditions that the majority of sub-Saharan are forced to live in and the wide-spread institutional and criminal violence that they are exposed to continue to be the main factors influencing medical and psychological needs' (2013: 3). For MSF, 'the longer that sub-Saharan migrants are in Morocco, the more vulnerable they become [as] the disparity between the expectations of a better life and the reality of their situation in Morocco can cause psychological shock and trauma' (2013: 8). MSF reported a deterioration of migrants' overall mental health in 2012. Increased violence, including constant police raids, meant migrants had to stay constantly alert. Symptoms of depression, anxiety and psycho-somatic tendencies were described as a common manifestation of migrants' feelings of fear, sadness, loss, confusion, anguish and abandonment.

Conclusion

For migrants, *chance* was discussed in combination with strength and courage to make sense of both their failed and successful attempts.[77] It sustained their hope: remaining 'focused [*être concentré*] on the objective' rather than 'forgetting' it albeit 'without thinking too much', also discussed as 'having the right mentality' —these were essential to adventurers. Thus could they avoid being 'overwhelmed' [*être dépassé*] and ultimately 'becoming mad'. Such a balance needed to be constantly negotiated as everyday life brought up regular violent events for many sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum.

As Perez put it to me in discussing madness in *Le Consulat*, 'We lift each other's spirit amongst ourselves here. Sometimes it is not easy when you have not achieved your objective and disappointment [*déception*] starts creeping into you. You

[77] I also became a provider of *chance* – albeit for a very short time after some of my informants asked me to check the online sea weather forecast before they embarked on their inflatable boats. They succeeded and it was half-jokingly rumoured that saying goodbye to me before going to the forest would bring luck. However, this was short-lived as people were quickly disappointed in my abilities.

have to lift the other person's spirit [*remonter le moral*], or else that person will get a blow'. Adventurers also explained that *chance* depended on how one behaved with other migrants. In Chapter 7, I return to the issue of 'having the right mentality' to explore moral issues amongst sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum. To do so, I examine the second element, after the 'objective' (see Chapter 4), in my informants' definitions of adventure, namely 'suffering'. As mentioned above, finding work was also discussed in term of *chance*. Chapter 6 examines working conditions for adventurers and focuses more particularly on the businesses set up by irregular, migrants in Taqaddoum.

Chapter 6 Working in Taqaddoum

Before the Friday prayer, Taqaddoum would be bustling as *R'batis* made purchases in the open-air markets to prepare the traditional couscous. Once the *Jumu'ah* was over, the sounds of men chattering on their way home from the mosque and the whistling of hundreds of pressure cookers in houses were supplanted by the banging of pots being dished out. Suddenly, the whole neighbourhood would grow quiet until mid-afternoon when children came out to play.

Mid-afternoon was also the time many sub-Saharans would return after having disappeared for the best part of the day. Sitting in Marmiton's restaurant, I would watch Mexican soap operas on my own while Marmiton fried the fish at a slower pace, knowing her clients would not arrive as early as usual. People were reluctant to explain where they went. When some mentioned the cemetery near the Chouhada mosque in l'Ocean, I did not make the obvious connections until Stéphane eventually explained: 'there you fill and carry buckets to water the flowers. People give you money: 2dh, 20dh or 10dh. Some nice people even give 50dh. It depends on the day and the people, on the weather. You pick weeds around the tombs.'

Begging was the Friday morning activity many of my informants were evasive about. They often called it '*fissabila*',[78] or '*taper Salam*'.[79] In the city centre, sub-Saharan migrants, often Anglophone women, could be seen sitting near the cathedral or wandering between café terraces to beg. Initially, I never observed any sub-Saharans begging in Taqaddoum. However, in 2013, after intense police brutality in the borderlands, wounded migrants were begging near *château* and outside mosques alongside disabled or elderly Moroccans.

Whilst in ghettoes, begging was often discussed when talking about the forests (see Chapter 2), migrants were ashamed and reluctant to discuss begging in Rabat. Junior, from *Le Consulat*, after telling me that he had 'never begged in [his] life ever', felt compelled to add that he '[did] not even know how to do it.' A Congolese refugee

[78] From '*Fi sabilillah*' in Arabic, meaning 'in the name of Allah', a phrase found in the Qur'an and associated with charity and alms-giving. Sub-Saharans who could not speak Arabic would only utter this formula and point their index upward to ask for charity.
[79] *Salam* is from the Arabic greeting '*As-salamu alaykum*' whilst '*taper'* (to hit) is French slang for asking something (usually money), like 'to tap' in Scottish slang.

explained to me that he had spent two years on the streets in Rabat and had to beg: 'deep down in my heart, I was ashamed, but how can you live?' Like Stéphane, migrants often stressed that they would never have imagined having to beg: 'if someone had told me in my country that I would be doing this, I would have refused. But here there is no work, and with this you can survive two days.'

Migrants often sneered at those who resorted to begging, especially those seemingly in good health, ironizing that begging was Nigerians' job without acknowledging that linguistic barriers impeded finding work even more for Anglophones. Migrants protested that Moroccans automatically assumed they were begging when they were asking for directions on the streets. Prejudices often mirroring each other (see Chapter 3), some migrants would angrily state that begging was 'hereditary' amongst Moroccans. Only wounded migrants like Cyriaque were outspoken about begging; although when paying for meals at Marmiton's, they would be the subjects of deprecating remarks about 'easy money'. Some would stress that migrants reduced to begging should simply return to their home country. Cyriaque would stress that begging was not easy, very profitable or devoid of risks (e.g. muggings), and that it was better to beg and die trying to cross the border than returning home 'empty-handed' and crippled.

As Jourdain, who co-owned a restaurant in the building opposite *L'Embassade*, put it to me: 'we belittle [*rabaisser*] ourselves when we beg, whilst we actually should show that we can succeed if we fight.' Though begging did not fit nicely into adventurers' epic tales, many had recourse to it. Migrants often explained that although they seemingly had limited choices, all decisions were important to reach the objective (see Chapter 5). On a Friday, deciding between begging and looking for a low paid, arduous, casual day-job with exploitative conditions referred to as 'slavery' was one more example.

In his exploration of the 'illegality industry', Andersson examines 'a dispersed "value chain", or the distinct domains in which migrant illegality is processed, "packaged", presented, and ultimately rendered profitable' (2014: 15). Similarly, Rodier (2012) examines the rising '*xénophobie* business', which generates highly profitable economic opportunities, notably for private security companies. Rather than broader patterns of exploitation of 'illegality', in this chapter, I am concerned with

how migrants coped with and made sense of their economic precariousness. In what conditions were irregular, sub-Saharan migrants working in Taqaddoum? What opportunities did they seize and create for themselves in this marginal neighbourhood where Moroccans had recourse to informal work too?

Drawing on the discussion of the camp as almost reaching the *polis* (see Chapter 2), this chapter examines the (albeit limited) resilient and transformative potential for irregular migrants' economic participation in Taqaddoum. As Christian, a Cameroonian migrant who set up a *cyber* (internet café) in Douar Hajja, has it: 'first you dance like the others before looking for yourself here in Morocco.' I explore how migrants' 'informal and entrepreneurial strategies' (Pickerill 2011) were more than livelihood strategies as they were linked to the articulation of adventure. Firstly, this chapter discusses the low-paid, casual employment opportunities, including within the neighbourhood itself, for migrants. Although conditions varied migrants often talked of 'forced labour' and 'slavery'. After discussing migrants' 'inclusive exclusion' and their entrepreneurship to make sense of both their exploitation and resilience, I explore migrants' 'businesses' in Taqaddoum and how these were tied to the quest for the 'objective' and 'finding one's life'.

Forced Labour

'*Du travail forcé* [forced labour], that is all that we, blacks, are offered here in Morocco' was a recurrent refrain amongst adventurers. Those who had found work for the day would return to *L'Embassade* in the evening flustered and bone-tired. Slumped uneasily on makeshift seats, they would massage their aching limbs and swear about Moroccan employers whilst drinking hot milk and eating *beignets* prepared by Nottingham. Cuts, bruises and wounds on migrants' bodies, as physical testimonies to the violent 'attacks' in the borderlands, blended together with injuries from the harsh working conditions in Rabat. 'Work in Morocco is death for us' Mamadou told me. When a Cameroonian living in Dinar's building suddenly died (apparently an aneurism) in his sleep, migrants quickly pointed to the hardship he had to endure daily on construction sites.

Perez, describing the process as 'slave trade' (*la traite négrière*), explained how migrants would reach *Chad*[80] at 6am, and wait for work until midday or well into the afternoon: 'bosses [*patrons*] arrive and one might select you because of your height, so he can exploit you as he wants. Sometimes they also take smaller people to better dominate them.' With his short and skinny physique, Perez, like Lamine, was rarely picked up at *Chad* or *la placette* as it was also known, the area at *château* on the edge of Taqaddoum, near the taxi rank on avenue Al Haouz. Many arrived even earlier than 6 am, to avoid being mugged at a time thieves were often on the look-out for migrants in dark alleyways. In this informal seat of labour exchange (or *bourse du travail*), a handful of Moroccans were usually waiting on the other side of avenue Al Haouz, directly opposite sub-Saharan migrants gathered around a large concrete slab or aligned on the pavement. Moroccans would sit in their small trucks or *Hondas*, waiting for contractors or home owners who wished to trade through them in order to hire and transport sub-Saharans.

Sub-Saharan migrants, exclusively men, in numbers varying from sometimes well over seventy people to a much smaller number later on during the day, would wait there for hours, chatting in small groups, drinking tea and – if they had spare change – eating fried dough coated in sugar (*sfen*) from a nearby hole-in-the-wall stall. At the sight of a car or truck pulling over, they would hurriedly gather on the edge of the pavement. There was also another *Chad*, nicknamed *Grand Chad* or *la Grande Place*, located at the other edge of Taqaddoum, near Hay Nadha, on avenue Mohamed Hassan Ouazzani, in opposition to *small Chad*, *la Petite Place* (*château*),

Bangal, a Malian living opposite *L'Embassade*, often lamented that 'in Morocco, there is no light work for the Blacks. Light work is only for the Arabs.' Similarly to the jobs undertaken *en route* to Morocco, the type of work given to migrants was essentially unskilled labour on construction sites in Rabat or nearby (e.g. Temara). Other manual activities included painting, carpentry, tiling, agriculture, removal jobs etc. Migrants were also taken to villas in wealthier neighbourhoods (Hay Riad and

[80] *Chad* was used by all sub-Saharans but no one could explain precisely where the term originates. One explanation recalled by Peraldi and Edogué Ntang (2011) points to similar crossroads in Algeria where sub-Saharan migrants (originally mainly Chadians) looked for work.

Souissi). Working conditions were arduous at best. Ivoirian Mohamoud vividly explained what '*travail de force*'[81] meant for migrants:

> Forced labour is when you lift bags and boxes of tiles. When you carry stones that no man has the right to lift. In the fields, you are told '*seer, seer mon ami* [go, go my friend].' Sweat dribbles on your back. They urge you to hurry up with the work. You are made to lift gravel. They call you and tell you to go pick up the stones downstairs and carry them to the fifth floor [of the building site], all day long, up and down the stairs. […] They make you lift things that machines only should carry. It cuts the arms, it breaks the feet. This is forced labour, the work done by blacks in Morocco.

Daily wages varied. On average, migrants reported earning between 70dh and 90dh a day, sometimes 100dh or more for those trading with a benevolent employer, but also often as low as 40-50dh. There was little scope for negotiation, especially during impromptu pick-ups at the crowded *Chad*. Once heavy duty chores were over at the job's site, migrants were often thrown out by bosses who sometimes refused to pay the wages, suddenly asking for immigration documents and threatening to call the police.

Besides discouragement and boredom, police raids cleared *Chad* from sub-Saharan men waiting for work. Whilst they feared deportation, migrants were most angry about not being able to get out of their houses and look for work for a day or more during intensive raids. Patrick recalled how a policeman apologised to him for an umpteenth police raid at *Grand Chad*, explaining that commuters driving to *Quartier des Ministères*, where numerous government buildings were located, had complained about the visible presence of migrants on the road. Ironically, when migrants listed the lavish villas where they had worked, many belonged to civil servants working in that neighbourhood.

Most jobs were for a few days maximum, though there were sometimes opportunities to work for a few weeks on construction sites further afield (e.g. Temara). A common longer-term job prospect for migrants who developed a relationship with their employer was to become a guard on their villas. Working conditions varied greatly. Guinean Mohamoud described an easy job and a benevolent,

[81] *Travail de force* (lit. 'strength labour' although not idiomatic in French) was used interchangeably with *travail forcé* (forced labour) to decry working conditions. I translate both as 'forced labour' for ease of reading.

yet patronising employer who did not want him to return to Taqaddoum on his day off. However, many others described extremely long hours and arduous work. Houdou worked as a guard along with another Cameroonian for a Moroccan contractor, with a vast villa on the outskirt of Rabat. He lasted one week and described to me that 1500dh a month was not worth the hazardous and arduous conditions as well as the 'lack of respect' and the 'contempt' from the boss: 'He would tell us "you are not worth anything, you do not know how to do anything."'

Employment in Taqaddoum

Increasingly, opportunities have arisen in Taqaddoum itself (Edogué Ntang and Peraldi 2011). Some worked at market stalls near *château*, selling clothing during the day and spicy sausage sandwiches when the neighbourhood busied itself in the evening. A few migrants from *L'Embassade* and *Le Consulat* were working in Douar Hajja's vegetable markets and in Maadid's bakeries. These arrangements could last months or be very temporary; for instance, Sylvin worked in an internet café only during Ramadan. Conditions were also very variable.

On avenue Al Farah, further along after the right bifurcation leading to *L'Embassade*, stood a large *hanout* (shop) and wholesale grocer selling flour, beans, rice, etc. in large bags. The three-storey building opposite, owned by the same Moroccan man, was used to store truck-loads of products. Guineans, Malians and Ivoirians from *Le Consulat* and the building opposite *L'Embassade* worked there. With hoods pulled over their heads to protect their necks and soften the weight of the bags, sub-Saharan and Moroccan employees lifted bags between the trucks, storage spaces and main shop. Covered in white flour, they would take small breaks to smoke cigarettes.

Bangal, a Malian in his thirties living opposite *L'Embassade*, was the sub-Saharan who had worked the longest there (eighteen months). He had lived with Ivoirians Ablou and Maro in another ghetto before the two Ivoirians moved to *Le Consulat*. It was Ablou who got them the job. Bangal stayed in the job as other sub-Saharan men working with him crossed to Europe, found more lucrative employment or could not endure the arduous working conditions. The work was physically demanding. Bangal described lifting 25kg bags, often three at a time, up to the third

floor of the warehouse, for nine hours a day. The sub-Saharans would only do the heavy lifting whilst Moroccan employees would alternate with working in the shop: 'It is only the forced labour we do. We are not paid the same. We get 1000dh a month, the others [Moroccans] get 2000, even the Moroccans only unloading.'

Further, Bangal explained all employees used to receive extra money for food every day as well as a 200dh bonus each first Friday of the month, but arrangements had changed since the employer's son had taken over daily management. When the older man, whom Bangal kept on calling '*papa'*, was in charge, Bangal said it was like 'being *chez toi* [at home]'. Migrants would be given food supplies from the *hanout* for free and if the police were to turn up for a raid, the old man would hide them, telling the police 'there are no Africans here.'

Bangal stressed he would go back to working for a daily wage of 80dh in construction sites if he could secure employment each day – which he could not. Besides unequal pay, Bangal often lamented about his employer's prejudices: 'they think we have left our country without a job, but I left with four diplomas: in painting, in metallurgy, in masonry and I also drive cars.' Bangal had various work experiences from Mali and Mauritania where he had lived for two years. He resented being paid to only lift heavy weights and not being able to discuss the work like the other Moroccan employees but being required to solely follow orders.

Whilst Bangal's description of his two bosses highlight Moroccans' contrasting range of attitudes towards sub-Saharan migrants (see Chapter 3), Mamadou's account of his employment in Taqaddoum illustrates further migrants' own ambivalences. It was through the son of an elderly Moroccan carpenter that Mamadou, a Guinean man in his late twenties living in Maadid, secured work. With his big round face and beaming smile, it was not hard to believe that the employer's son accepted his offer when Mamadou passed by the workshop in the alleyway leading to *L'Embassade* and asked the son 'to pass over that saw so [he] could give him a hand.' When the modest workshop, a cramped space filled with wooden planks and carpeted with thick layers of wood dust and chippings, was not shut for lack of business, Mamadou could be seen handling the circular-saw outside or drinking tea sat on a piece of wood with workmate Jaouad, a Moroccan who had first started as an apprentice there.

Mamadou, who explained they were both paid the same and treated equally, always stressed that they had an easy and respectful working relationship although Mamadou spoke only a few words of Arabic and Jaouad understood almost no French. Yet, Mamadou said that when there was little work, Jaouad only would be kept in 'because he has a family to look after.'

When asked if he liked the job, Mamadou started with one of his hearty laughs: 'man only works to pass his life. You cannot live without working. With work here, you earn enough to pay the rent and eat, but not to prepare your life.' Mamadou, who had worked in carpentry since the age of twelve and left his own business in Mali hoping to find employment and learn new skills in his trade in Europe, found the menial job of making simple doors and windows in Douar Hajja repetitive and at odd with his ambitions.

His employer and family expressed sympathy with the plight of migrants. Mamadou did not need to lie to get his wages but was asked to give them a week's notice before packing for Tangier. Each time he returned from an unsuccessful 'attempt', he simply resumed his job. The son often hid sub-Saharans in the workshop during police raids and even stood up for Mamadou: 'when people say *mon ami* he says "no, this is Mohamed." When I eat with them, some Moroccans are astonished. He says that we are all the same.' However, Mamadou was reluctant to respond to his boss's invitation to go pray or eat together: 'for me, he is a brother. But there are limits because, if there was no work relation, then it would be useless. He is a Moroccan, they are all racists.' Puzzled, I pointed he had just told me about the employer hiding sub-Saharans during raids. Mamadou scratched his head, uneasy: 'still, I am scared of Moroccans. I have not been assaulted, but I have seen *camarades* who have. God saves me, it could have been me. In the heads of Moroccans, they have the right to attack blacks.'

Inclusive exclusion and entrepreneurship

Drawing on Žižek's assertion that in order to function, '[power] has to rely on a kind of obscene supplement' (1997: 34), De Genova argues that immigration law enforcement and border policing constitute a kind of 'Border Spectacle' whereby migrants' 'illegality' is performed and spectacularly rendered visible. According to De Genova, 'if the Border Spectacle supplies a scene of ostensible "exclusion" […], it

nonetheless conceals (in plain view, as it were) the public secret of a sustained recruitment of "illegal" migrants as undocumented labour. This we may comprehend to be the obscene [*sic*] of inclusion' (2013: 6). For instance, exploring the US-Mexican border's 'revolving door', De Genova describes the juxtaposition of 'an increasingly militarized spectacle of apprehensions, detentions, and deportations with the banality of a virtually permanent importation of undocumented migrant labor' (2005: 242). Similarly, in exploring 'how borders regulate and structure the relations between capital, labor, law, subjects, and political power' (2013: 8), Mezzadra and Neilson argue that 'the image of a border as a wall, or as a device that serves first and foremost to *exclude* […] is misleading in the end' (2013: 7). For instance, discussing the intimate connections between deportability, law and the state, De Genova and Peultz examine how 'deportable populations do not embody the supposed absence of the state, but rather become the object of its sovereign power to exclude, even while it incorporates them' (2010: 15).

The above emphasis on inclusive exclusion offers tools to comprehend the exploitation of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum who, as described above, formed a readily available pool of cheap, disposable labour. As Kettani and Peraldi put it, 'for the greatest part, it is to perpetuate a certain power relationship (personalized, authoritarian and absolute) that some employers recruit migrant workers' (2011: 71).[82] A Moroccan employer interviewed by them in Rabat, cynically explained that 'the sub-Saharan employee is more flexible than a Moroccan one: he won't say no if I ask him to stay longer. It does not mean that I exploit him but that I can rely on him in unexpected circumstances' (*ibid*: 70).[83]

However, such an approach, with its systematic association of power and 'obscenity', gives little scope to explore how migrants cope with exploitative labour relationships. Rather than focusing on patterns of exploitation which may be described as inclusive exclusion, this chapter is concerned with examining how irregular migrants in Taqaddoum made sense of their working conditions. As described above, Houdou talked of 'enduring' arduous working conditions. Similarly, discussing work on construction sites, Ivoirian Mamadou explained to me that

[82] My translation.
[83] My translation.

> We accept because we want to enter. When you are not *chez toi* [at home], where you have arrived, you are forced to respect the citizens, even if you are treated like a dog. There are people calling us *klb* ['dog' in Arabic]. Me, I speak Arabic, I understand. But I am Ivorian, I am forced to accept, I am not *chez moi*.

Speaking Arabic was sometimes an asset in negotiating in the work place, in being assigned tasks other than menial, repetitive and gruelling chores; but often understanding Arabic simply meant understanding better the daily insults in the work place. These, like the rest of the arduous working conditions, had to be 'endured'. At work and in adventure more broadly, one needs 'to control one's heart' Bangal told me. Toiling, often used as an example when discussing adventure and 'suffering' (see Chapter 7), was discussed as crucial for reaching the 'objective'. Dinar stressed that working hard was essential for him 'to return to [his] country, not like a thief, but a freeman, a hero.' As described in Chapter 4, Patrick would criticize migrants watching TV instead of looking for work: 'if people are lazy here, they will be lazy there [in Europe] too.' However, working conditions figured prominently in the reasons migrants listed for being disenchanted with Morocco and wanting to move on. As Ivoirian Mamadou put it to me when discussing work, 'I loved Morocco before coming, but the situation here means that now I don't love it anymore.'

In her discussion of irregular sub-Saharan migrants' activities in Morocco, Pickerill asserts that 'it is both unhelpful and inaccurate to consider these individuals as helpless victims, reckless adventurers, or a dangerous, invasive horde that saps all resources' (2011: 411). Yet, describing the arduous work opportunities in Taqaddoum as informal and 'entrepreneurial ventures' (2011: 395) seems at first untenable. Indeed, for Valenzuela, 'the literature on entrepreneurship is primarily elitist, placing a large emphasis on firm size and location, innovation, proprietorship, and capital start-up' (2001: 335). He argues that whilst contingent workers such as the temporary self-employed (e.g. day labourers) are relegated to the literature on informal economy, they belong in the scholarship of migrant entrepreneurship.

However, in anthropology there is a longstanding tradition of examining migrants' economic initiatives, including within the informal economy, as entrepreneurship. In his work amongst Fafras migrant-workers from northern Ghana in Accra (Southern Ghana) within the informal economy, Hart's discussion of 'small-

scale entrepreneurs' does not refer to 'businessmen in the Western sense, […] but rather to anyone who controls the management of capital which he has invested in some enterprise in order to realize profit' (1970: 107). Entrepreneurship is then not a status but a role. Describing the Ghanaian context of high living cost and low wages which has led to an increase in informal income-generating activities, Hart asks 'do the "reserve army of urban unemployed and underemployed" really constitute a passive, exploited majority in cities like Accra, or do their informal economic activities possess some autonomous capacity for generating growth in the incomes of the urban (and rural) poor?' (1973: 66). By showing that poverty is ever present within wage-labour whilst initiatives within the informal sector provide opportunities to improve income, Hart points that such a 'reserve army […] may or may not be the economic disaster it is often thought to be' (1973: 88).

Besides calling for greater attention to '*indigenous* as well as Western forms of economic organization' (1970: 118) in development planning, Hart's ethnographic work illustrates how 'we need not think all of those who enter in-formal occupations do so as a result of failure to obtain a wage-job' (1973: 88). Since then, anthropologists such as Brettell and Alsatt have continued criticizing dominant analyses of immigrant entrepreneurship for the 'insufficient emphasis placed on individual agency and decision-making' (2007: 384). Specifically, they wish to depart from what Min and Bozorgmehr label as the 'disadvantage thesis [which] posits that immigrants are more motivated than the native-born to start their own businesses because of general labour-market disadvantages' (2003: 25).

As Valenzuela has it, 'the market activities of marginalised self-employed workers are often labelled as informal and underground, or have been dismissed as a pseudo-economy comprised of the poorest, most unqualified and desperate pool of recently-arrived illegal immigrants' (Valenzuela 2001: 337). In his case study of southern American migrants working as day labourers in Los Angeles, he stresses that 'for many, day labour work is an attempt at labour market survival. But to paint all day labourers as desperate job-seekers at the bottom of the barrel with few employment options ignores the complex process of this market and characteristics of the workers themselves' (2001: 340). Notably, he argues that although southern American, often undocumented, day labourers are a pliable work force, some of the migrants take part

'because of attractive labour market values such as flexibility, wage options, and diversity of jobs – all key factors that afford a modicum of autonomy for these workers' (2001: 346).

Fig. 62 Cameroonian man training with weights made from recycled construction materials.

Kloosterman *et al.* claim that 'if a certain category of workers is marginalized and has difficulty in gaining access to the formal labour market, employers will be faced with a cheap pool of labour that is probably willing to engage substantially in informal production' (1998: 255). Irregular sub-Saharan migrants living in Taqaddoum could not access the formal market and provided a ready pool of cheap and available labour. Yet, although they had little choice in whether to engage or not, casual day labour at *Chad* entailed elements of entrepreneurship.

It was not uncommon to see migrants waiting for potential employers by *château* with their own set of tools, hereby advertising specific skills. Some migrants also trained on a regular basis to keep fit and increase chances of finding work (Fig. 62). Giving out their phone number and keeping employers' numbers was also important. Migrants who waited at *Chad* were those who had not managed to secure employment from their list of contacts, or who had no contacts at all. Patrick and Guinean Mamadou established enduring work relationships with some Moroccan

employers on construction sites: they would be approached to provide a list of workers and could make their friends – and crucially the people who shared the rent with them – benefit from it. One could also sometimes let another migrant replace one for a day in order to deal with other (potentially more lucrative) businesses elsewhere and not lose one's job. There was also more leeway for negotiating work conditions and pay when one had worked for the same employer over time. Like information about the borderlands, information about good and bad employers was shared in ghettoes and houses. Migrants could then juggle several opportunities at the same time and leave at once when deciding to go to the borderlands after having earned enough money (e.g. for a zodiac, a bus ticket etc.).

However, there were many obvious limits to migrants' strategies in the Moroccan informal sector. Often, there was simply no work, or police activity prevented everyone from getting out of the house. Migrants who worked on sites and became ill or injured did not benefit from any health insurance. Further, migrants' articulations of important 'labour values' such as independence and genuine opportunities (looking for one's life) in adventure could hardly be seen as thriving in the work opportunities described above. As described by Pickerill, 'faced with legal and societal barriers to integration, [sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco] develop creative livelihood strategies in the informal sector, often launching entrepreneurial ventures' (2011: 395). Although migrants often talked of 'business', using both the English word and the French one for 'market' (*marché*), they did not call themselves entrepreneurs or businessmen. Furthermore, in the current context of hostility towards irregular migration across the Mediterranean region, the term 'entrepreneur' takes a different connotation. For instance, in his discussion of the 'migration apparatus' and its contribution to a globally imbalanced economy, Feldman argues that it is legitimised by its positive framing 'as safeguarding the creative entrepreneur, preventing brain drain, enhancing migrants' skills, and saving people from smugglers, traffickers, identity theft, and risky clandestine border' (2012: 181). In the next section, I discuss the precarious businesses set up by sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum and explore their potential in helping them 'reach their objective', or 'prepare' themselves through such fragile ventures.

Looking for oneself in Taqaddoum

Ghettoes and foyers in Douar Hajja and Maadid were the loci of small informal economic activities. For instance, besides profits generated by 'chiefs of ghettoes' (see Chapter 2), there were inhabitants selling products (e.g. cigarettes by the unit) as well as migrants acting as itinerant salesmen (e.g. clothes and shoes retrieved from bins) and other tradesman offering services. For instance, Cameroonian Pat regularly visited *L'Embassade* with his electric trimmer and blades to offer 5dh cuts (Fig. 63).

Fig. 63 A hairdresser in *L'Embassade*.

As Renooy has it, 'informal economy' refers to 'activities aimed at producing a positive effect on income […], for which the terms of legislation and regulations […] applicable to the activities are not met' (1990: 24). Portes and Sassen-Koob note that although such a definition encompasses criminal activities 'the term is customarily reserved for such activities as those in the food, clothing and housing industries that are not intrinsically illegal but in which the production and exchange escape legal regulation' (Portes and Sassen-Koob 1987: 31). Yet, some activities within ghettoes would be considered criminal in Morocco. Some migrants purchased hashish from Moroccan drug dealers in Douar Hajja and resold it in *L'Embassade*. In one of the

ghettoes I often visited, the chief of the ghetto's room was occupied during the day by Moroccan prostitutes. Out of the 20dh fee, the chief of the ghetto would take 10dh from each of the sub-Saharans who entered the room. Some sub-Saharans also bought and sold zodiacs and life jackets or acted as middle-men between migrants in Taqaddoum and Moroccans who facilitated border crossings. However, profits were slim and irregular.

Fig. 64 *Beignets* in *L'Embassade*.

Some economic activities in the ghettoes were more settled. When I first started going to *L'Embassade*, Nottingham was one of the migrants running a food business there (Figs. 64 and 65). Every day, he would prepare *beignet haricots* with *bouillie* for sub-Saharan migrants from near *L'Embassade*, and occasionally beyond Taqaddoum.[84] Describing himself as self-taught, he explained he had never done it before but started in Taqaddoum after observing other migrants cooking. Regularly buying large bags of flour from the shop Bangal worked in, he prepared food from dawn till late, with peak times before migrants left to work and upon their return. He also prepared more substantial lunches (e.g. rice and chicken with peanut sauce) during

[84] Round fried dough with spicy cooked beans on the side, accompanied by hot milk and flour mixed together with lemon.

Ramadan as Sammy's restaurant opposite *L'Embassade* could not cope with the demand from sub-Saharan customers.

Fig.65 Cooking in *L'Embassade*.

Nottingham bought pots, cutlery, gas bottles and other necessary items with money (around 500dh) earned on construction sites. Following his *refoulement* to Algeria, others took over his activities, including Fosto who had been one of Nottingham's 'apprentices'. After several months spent in Algeria, Nottingham returned and resumed work on construction sites. Benefits from cooking varied greatly, but on good days during Ramadan he could save 100dh for himself. Furthermore he insisted he was 'free': 'I could rest whenever I wanted, there was no pressure like on the construction sites, *yallah yallah*.' Similarly, for Fosto, it was 'better to know that there will be at least a few dirhams in [his] pockets every day, than not knowing if there would be work [at *Chad*].' In adventure, (economic) opportunities had to be weighed against one another.

Dramen gave me similar reasons to Fosto for working as a cobbler on the streets of Douar Hajja during a time of few working opportunities at *Chad*. He needed to eat. Mirroring the figure of the poor Moroccan shoe-shiner in wealthier neighbourhoods of Rabat was that of the sub-Saharan cobbler in Taqaddoum, often sat on a worn-out wooden crate at a cross road with a soiled rag spread over the legs to

protect one's own clothes from dirty soles. Dramen taught Perez how to do '*cordonnerie*' (shoe-mending) in a concrete shack near *Le Consulat*. The room was bare save for an unfilled and cracked shelving unit, some gas bottles and a few wicker baskets containing a couple of old loaves of bread. Overnight, it was used as a depot by the shopkeepers working on the other side of the crossroads. During the day, they let sub-Saharans work in it for free 'because of *fi sabilillah*' – charity.

Dramen said the materials belonged to an *ancien*, someone from *Le Consulat* who had left for Tangier. Under a few old shoes, a box of tools contained a jumble of needles, reels of black and white thread, knives, screwdrivers, glue, small nails and a cast iron cobbler stand. All this cost between 100-200dh. Small reels were around 10dh. A small tub of glue was about 8dh but did not last long, especially since some of the Moroccan teenagers often asked for some to sniff. Dramen explained he did not pay for most of those, apart from what he replaced after use. His 'older brother' had left it for him for free saying 'you are my little one, take it.' Dramen then learned the trade from 'another older brother' in Taqaddoum.

Dramen worked up to 10-12 hours and earned about 40-50dh on a good day, although he sometimes earned nothing at all. Ivoirians Aziz and Mamadou, who had their regular spots nearer *Le Consulat*, also told me 40dh was the average, but they had to reinvest some of that sum in new materials. As opposed to Dramen, they had made cobbling their steady activity. They had regular customers, who sometimes paid them with food rather than money. Mamadou was tired of jobs on construction sites and Aziz was unable to lift heavy things because of issues with his spine.

Aziz laughed when I asked if he would do this job in Ivory Coast: 'it is something we do to survive. […] if you tell my mother, she will not believe you.' This kind of job was another thing to endure in adventure, not something they said they wished to do anywhere else, whether in Europe or back home. Whilst Aziz often hinted that such activity was almost shameful and did not correspond to migrants' aspirations in adventure, Mamadou would often stress that it was dangerous since it involved being exposed on the street all day long. They had both learnt shoe-mending and received the equipment from other migrants, but others followed a short training course with NGOs (e.g. Caritas or the protestant church) and received a small sum to start off.

Fig. 66 Cooking in a Douar Hajja ghetto.

In contrast to sub-Saharans working outside as cobblers or carrying out their activity between different ghettoes, some livelihood strategies entailed the establishment of indoor businesses in dedicated rooms or flats, especially restaurants (Figs 66, 67, 68 and 69). For instance, Marmiton rented a small ground floor flat to run her restaurant. When I first met Marmiton, she was heavily pregnant and staying at Jourdain's restaurant opposite *L'Embassade*. She had recently come back from the forests around Nador. Prior to delivering her baby, she moved into another house with two Congolese women who soon after left for the forests. They occupied the windowless ground floor of a building with one small living room with bench-couches and a tiny room with space for a single mattress and some bags. They slept in those two rooms. On the landing, there was a sink as well as a gas hob they brought. A small alcove in the corner hosted a squat-toilet. It was in that flat that Marmiton slowly opened a restaurant. Customers sat in the living room on the couches arranged in an L-shape, facing a TV she had left at *Le Consulat* before setting off for Nador.

Fig. 67 Marmiton in her restaurant.

Marmiton worked as an auxiliary nurse in Cameroon before moving to Congo, where she managed the till at a relative's restaurant. She eventually left, hoping to cross to Europe and reached Morocco in early 2011, spending several months in the forests. In Rabat, she saw some sub-Saharan businesses in Douar Kora and realized there was a demand for food amongst the migrants. From *Le Consulat*, she started with a capital of 150dh to prepare sandwiches with *la peau* (beef skin), which she bought from Moroccan wholesalers and took to a *hammam* to be scorched to remove the hair. Selling those for 4dh, she would carry them in a bucket to *château* in the morning and go around ghettoes in Taqaddoum. Exhausted, she took her savings to go to the forests near Nador where she stayed until Christmas Eve 2012. She returned pregnant and started setting up a restaurant again. She repeated she did not wish to work, like many other sub-Saharan women, as a cleaner for a Moroccan family. She explained she valued being autonomous and independent.

Fig. 68 Waiting for food at Marmiton's.

She worked hard in this enclosed space where a thick cloud of fried food and smoke from the cigarettes Marmiton also sold hovered. Once her baby was born, she had even more to do. There were a lot of preparations and calculations to be made. Marmiton bought supplies and would haggle in French with Moroccan shopkeepers. When prices by the kilo were cheaper in other neighbourhoods like Akari, she would leave early morning to go and buy there. In the evening, she also started preparing food for the day after.

Prices in the restaurants were low and the profit margin rather thin. Marmiton first started selling rice with peanut sauce and fried fish. It was 10dh for a big dish. When business picked up as customers discovered the new restaurant, she started making chicken dishes too (12dh each). For a while, she stocked cans of beers and bottles of red wine. She once explained to me that by selling fifty dishes she could make a 150dh profit. However, she meant 150dh after food expenses, and this did not include money for the rent and bills as well as other expenses. Further, she did not always sell fifty dishes, but often twenty or less.

Fig. 69 Cameroonian cook in her kitchen.

Restaurants were convenient for migrants, like Bangal, who had a short lunch break whilst working in the neighbourhood. Migrants would point out that sub-Saharan food was more 'nutritious'. Houdou explained he could not 'recharge' himself as well with Moroccan food when he needed to work hard on construction sites. He needed 'African food'. The success of such ventures also relied on the establishment of spaces where migrants felt safe and could forget everyday life in Morocco for a while. In Marmiton's windowless restaurant, the TV and its satellite channels provided escape beyond the precarious everyday life in Taqaddoum. In the hairdressing salon set up near *Le Consulat* by Charlie, an Ivoirian in his late 20s, people came to chat. There, in a narrow storage room, a few chairs were set against the wall, facing the mirrors on the opposite side, where customers and migrants who only wanted some distraction came to listen to music or watch DVDs on the small TV:

> People come to spend the time. We chat about life here which traumatises people. They only talk about this: how people treat them. It is everyone's intention to leave, but at first you do not know. We discuss how to go forward and backward. It is the adventure. […] You get a sense that all the blacks are ambitious and courageous, they have objectives. So we chat about adventure, how to orient ourselves. Everyone has their objective.

Dinar often claimed he had been the first to buy a very large TV for the restaurant he set up with his partner Anastasie after he saw sub-Saharan migrants standing outside Moroccan cafés, unable to sit down to watch a game. He purchased an Al-Jazeera subscription so customers would come to his restaurant and consume whilst watching the football games. Although Sammy or Marmiton always repeated there was no competition amongst themselves, they had to keep prices low. Marmiton's restaurant was deemed safe because it was located further inside Douar Hajja, and police usually did not venture that way, focusing on streets where migrants lived which were more accessible. However, because of the remoteness, it was farther away for her customers (often, but not exclusively, Cameroonians from *Le Consulat* and *L'Embassade*) than Sammy's restaurant and migrants feared being mugged on the way. To provide an incentive to hesitant customers, she kept her prices lower than at Sammy's, where a dish of rice and chicken was 15dh.

Fig. 70 Advert for Christian's *cyber* in a Cameroonian restaurant.

As Kloosterman *et al.* have it, 'immigrant entrepreneurs are primarily to be found in those segments where new firms require small outlays of capital and where labour is consequently the most important input. These segments are, as a consequence, relatively easily accessible, which, in turn, makes them highly competitive' (1998: 260). As with the bakeries owned by migrants in the Netherlands

examined by Kloosterman *et al.*, restaurants and other sub-Saharan businesses in Taqaddoum had to keep prices low. Elsewhere in Rabat, as in Douar Kora or J5, similar dishes could cost between 50dh and 100dh. To attract migrants, Marmiton and others had to rely on word of mouth. However, there were some attempts at self-promotion. In Dinar's restaurant, there was an advert for the *cyber* owned by Cameroonian Christian (Fig. 70).

Keeping prices down was crucial for hairdressers as well. Pat stopped carrying his trimmer from ghetto to ghetto and began working for a Guinean migrant who had opened a hairdressing salon and who also 'owned' some ghettoes, including the one managed by Ivoirian Mamadou after he left *Le Consulat*. The Guinean had no experience in hairdressing, so when Pat did not have any other more profitable work on, he worked in the salon. Pat charged 7dh for a haircut, cheaper than the 10dh charged by Chris, a much more established Nigerian hairdresser operating at the bottom of Douar Hajja near Maadid, and even cheaper than Moroccan hairdressers (20dh). However, he had to share the profits with the Guinean, who took more than half of the intake, although he paid for all the supplies and the rent.

Profits to be shared could be slim as business was not steady. Further, migrants who ran businesses in Taqaddoum faced the same range of issues as all sub-Saharans in the neighbourhood. For instance, rents were often much higher than for Moroccans. Pat explained that the Guinean he worked for was paying 'the black price' since he found out after befriending Moroccan shopkeepers on the same narrow alleyway that they paid around 500dh a month for rent – half of what the Guinean man was charged. Moroccan landlords also sometimes objected to businesses being set up in their houses on account of 'the noises', although Marmiton managed to convince the landlord by explaining that the business guaranteed the rent would be paid – an argument which could also prompt landlords to raise the rent.

In fact, migrants like Marmiton and Charlie were doubly affected by the problems migrants faced since their customers' issues affected them too. Marmiton often complained there was 'no market' because of police raids or a sudden surge in departures to the forests. She had to calculate how many dishes to prepare for the following day to limit waste; her earnings were irregular and not always enough to cover the running costs. In fact, she was only able to afford the rent thanks to a

contribution from Caritas because of an agreement with ALECMA (as explained in Chapter 1). For Marmiton, dwindling numbers of migrants, hence customers, meant 'bankruptcy [*la faillite*]'. As Charlie explained to me, 'I never know. I get up and I might make 20dh or 60dh, you don't know. There is no fixed amount of money. You get up and you never know how many customers you will have, it depends on whether the blacks got work or not.' He added that if people worked regularly and earned around 70-100dh a day, then 'they could get by'; and so could he.

One way to keep the flow of customers steady was to allow flexible payments and offer credit, at least initially. Kloosterman *et al.* state that 'informal economic activities, hence, have to take place within frameworks of trust' (1998: 256). As examined in Chapter 7, trust between migrants living in equally precarious conditions was fragile. There was always the risk of not getting paid; Anastasie and Dinar stopped giving credit to people other than those living in their building. Relations with other migrants could also be strained because of the perceived success of the migrants. I often heard people in Marmiton's restaurant accusing her of 'eating money' – of making a living on migrants' backs.

Migrants often mentioned 'independence' and 'autonomy' when explaining why they put so much effort into business ventures which did not provide much money but at least ensured a more stable income than *Chad*, or sometimes a complement to casual wage-labour as described by Hart (1970) amongst migrant workers in Accra. Some migrants would talk of their activities in terms of 'looking for themselves' in Morocco. In 2013, Christian, a Cameroonian who had been in Morocco for two years, opened a *cyber* (internet café) near Douar Hajja's market where he charged 3dh per hour (1dh less than most internet cafés in Douar Hajja). Christian, who had similar experiences from home and a diploma in electronic maintenance, was employed by Moroccans in a small business dealing with computers and TVs. Thanks to his Moroccan contacts, he had set up a phone line and a *cyber* with six second-hand computers connected to the internet. Christian explained that he reached Morocco with the intention to cross to Europe but he failed twice and lost most of his money. Fed up with 'forced labour' on construction sites, he started to look for more lucrative opportunities: 'when you arrive somewhere and you master some technique, first you dance like the others before looking for yourself [*te chercher*].' Like Marmiton

identifying a demand for sub-Saharan food, Christian ‘looked around and realized that the only distraction for foreigners, for blacks [in Taqaddoum], is the cyber.’

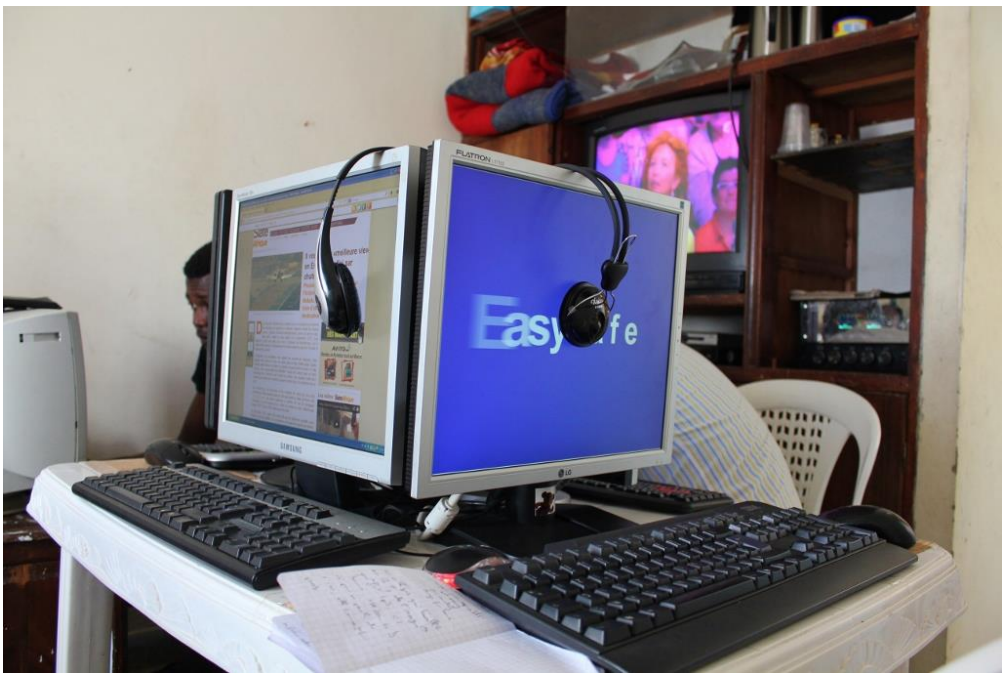

Fig. 71 At Christian’s *cyber*.

Christian threw himself into the business, giving up his room in nearby Hay Nadha, to sleep in the *cyber* in Douar Hajja (Fig. 71) in order to save as much money as he could. Without specifying how much, he explained he was still not making much profit and could not even pay the Cameroonian assistant who looked after the *cyber* when he was working in the Moroccan business. Christian said he was, ‘for now’, giving up on the idea of irregularly entering Europe. He would only enter with a visa. He was thinking of making enough to move to China or Europe. In the meantime, he was ‘looking for [himself] in Taqaddoum’, even thinking of branching out into opening other *cybers* in Douar Kora if things went well.

I met Christian shortly before leaving Morocco and did not sustain contact. However, I observed how other migrants who owned businesses constantly readjusted their future plans. When I asked Dinar if he was worried about the fact that other restaurants were opening in the neighbourhood, he dismissed the concern: ‘as soon as they will hear that people are crossing in the borderlands up north, they will pack up and go like the others.’ Adventurers’ businesses in Taqaddoum were unstable, like their customers’ migratory journeys, and many restaurants opened and shut before I

even had time to visit them. Their owners were also trying 'to reach their objective'. Charlie's salon was owned by another migrant who left for Europe before Charlie took over the place. Businesses regularly opened, shut or were taken over by other migrants who bought the material and took over the rent. A Cameroonian woman opened a new *ganda* with *beignets* in Douar Hajja with the help of a small capital sum (around 600dh) given to her at the end of a short training course at the protestant church. She rented the basement of a building with her husband and toddler but was looking for other people to move in since costs were too high and business was not picking up. I asked her if she planned on staying long and she replied that 'you never know when *mbeng* ["making it to Europe" (see Chapter 4)] will finish in your head' and quickly added that she was also thinking about returning to Cameroon, but 'not empty-handed, with at least 500 euros.' As explored in Chapter 4, migrants often simultaneously discussed staying in Morocco and moving 'forward' or 'backward'.

Fig. 72 At Charlie's salon.

For Charlie, Morocco was a destination where he hoped to succeed with hairdressing, a profession in which he had no formal qualification but what he called a 'gift'. He was initially set to go to Gabon, followed a friend's advice and flew to Morocco in 2012. His visa had expired but he set up his salon in Douar Hajja (Figs. 72 and 73) whilst living in H4 near Hay Nadha. However, by spring 2013, he was

already disenchanted with conditions after only a few months in Morocco. His greatest worry was 'how to leave.' He would draw parallels between other migrants' reluctance to stay in Morocco and his own plans for the future: 'settling [in Morocco] permanently is not in people's intentions. It is not in my programme either. The situation does not allow it.' He would lament that 'all the blacks here in Taqaddoum have a trade but finding your place in the society here is hard.' He explained to me that he was 'reflecting' on what to do. He wanted to earn enough money to set up a business in the Ivory Coast but the 'conditions and the milieu' did not allow him to save money. He wanted 'to go forward. Anywhere.' 'Europe' or 'Africa' were options he was considering; in Morocco 'I have not earned enough to orient myself yet. […] I took the risk of spending the 600dh [for the rent of the salon]. We will see what happens. In life, what you do is a risk, but I am a fighter.'

Fig. 73 At Charlie's salon.

Some businesses were purposefully started as ventures to fund crossing attempts up north. Jourdain and Sammy set up their restaurant opposite *L'Embassade* with a third migrant, who left before them, to gather enough money for a safer crossing of the border. Shortly after I left the field, they left someone in charge of the restaurant to go north. When they returned unsuccessful, they resumed their activities. When I saw Jourdain in 2014, he explained that if they had crossed, they would have simply

left the restaurant with the other migrant. Businesses in Taqaddoum were not holding migrants back from attempting the crossing or moving elsewhere since they had the option of resuming their activities if they failed. If they succeeded, the business in Taqaddoum would not amount to much. One central African woman running a restaurant in Douar Hajja was often talking about 'expanding the restaurant'. When I looked puzzled and reminded her that, as she had often explained to me, she was always on the lookout for opportunities to cross the sea, she shrugged and said that 'even in Europe it is difficult. When I ask [relatives] there to send me just 50 euros, they cannot afford it.' Eventually, before I left the field, she left with IOM just to settle some family matters. She was unsure whether she would return or not. As Morocco announced the process of regularisation (see Conclusion), she quickly returned to Morocco and took back the restaurant she had temporarily entrusted to someone else. When I visited her in 2014 she complained that the 'new politics of migration' did not live up to her expectations and that there was 'no market' with the restaurant; she was hoping to get a regular job or try crossing to Europe again. Running a restaurant was not exactly what she aspired to, whether in Morocco or Europe, although when asked about what she would like to do, she had no definite answers.

Businesses also funded return trips. Anastasie, who had been in Morocco two years, was scared when she saw the sea and did not get in the boat to Spain. Dinar, who had been in Morocco over six years, tried too many times according to him and said that it was 'too late' for him to get to Europe and struggle there to make money. They decided to set up a restaurant to save as much they could before returning to Cameroon. Anastasie was thinking of opening a beauty salon, Dinar of buying a taxi or buying a piece of land. In contrast to Nottingham's basic operation in *L'Embassade*, they tried to make theirs 'the best restaurant in Taqaddoum.' They even invested in a freezer to keep food longer and make savings by buying chicken or fish in bulk whenever it was cheaper. Although they planned on staying longer to save, they eventually left shortly after me and I lost track of them. Fridges and freezers in some restaurants illustrated this tension between permanence and transience as irregular sub-Saharan migrants invested money and time in businesses but assets such as fridges were only 'materials' (*du materiel*) which could be sold or passed on and weighed

little compared with a successful crossing into Europe or opportunities expected somewhere else.

Migrants from outside Taqaddoum would also move in solely to set up businesses there. A *maquis*, a bar selling alcohol and some food, was set up by irregular Ivoirians who came from Temara to Douar Hajja, hoping they could make money by providing distraction to bored migrants in Taqaddoum. They shut not long after having opened as Moroccan neighbours complained about the sale of alcohol and the noise. In this *maquis*, only sub-Saharans were allowed. The son of the landlord would occasionally come in to have fun with the customers and smoke hashish, but the Ivoirian migrants refused entry to Moroccans to avoid trouble and also offer a safe space to sub-Saharan migrants who wanted to go out and forget about everyday issues of violence and exclusion. Sub-Saharan businesses constituted vulnerable 'captive markets' (Kloosterman *et al.* 1998: 257). Customers were exclusively sub-Saharan migrants, mostly irregular migrants from the neighbourhood, though there were sometimes sub-Saharan students coming to Jourdain's. Ivoirian Charlie's salon was located between *Le Consulat* and the cliffs at the end of Douar Hajja. It was a bare six-square-metre room protected by a curtain. The only visible sign was a handwritten inscription outside the shop – on the wall – with a phone number and 'black *coiffure*' written by the previous sub-Saharan hairdresser. Charlie's customers were sub-Saharans but very occasionally Charlie dealt with a Moroccan, willing to pay half the price charged in Moroccan salons. This was also the case for Pat who sometimes saw a Moroccan mother bring her son to get his hair done: 'she is not complicated. She says "*mon ami*, do it like *au pays*."' However, these were exceptions. A circle of customers reduced to sub-Saharan migrants, as well as European or American researchers, greatly narrowed the economic potential of business growth.

Although the clientele was solely sub-Saharan migrants, the businesses were clearly embedded in the neighbourhood. As described above, Marmiton had her regular suppliers and she would haggle with butchers and fishmongers who knew her well. Nottingham was nicknamed '*le maire*' (the mayor) by the shopkeepers around *L'Embassade* where he regularly bought his supplies. Sub-Saharans working as cobblers on the streets of Douar Hajja illustrate further the economic links between migrants and the Moroccan inhabitants, some of whom lived in equally precarious

conditions. As argued by Edogué Ntang and Peraldi, 'the emergence of a multiplicity of [Moroccan] businesses [in Taqaddoum] can be read as a sign of prosperity linked to the presence of sub-Saharan populations' (2011: 46).[85] It is not rare to see internet cafés with an entirely sub-Saharan clientele during most of the day. Migrants bought food and paid rent in the neighbourhood, and, crucially, they paid cash without usually being able to get credit. As discussed in Chapter 2, they were also paying big sums for renting flats. Besides the businesses described above, Edogué Ntang and Peraldi (2011: 48) mention the presence of an African Boutique off a main road in Douar Hajja in which a Central African woman, who had managed to obtain a passport from a western African country exempted of visa for Morocco, sold cosmetics and food from sub-Saharan Africa. There was also a seemingly successful Senegalese tailor's workshop in Maadid. Those were fairly visible and established on the streets of Taqaddoum. Their clientele came from other neighbourhoods and clearly included Moroccans (e.g. wigs and cosmetics in the boutique). There were also a few Senegalese transnational migrants who, like many others near the city centre, sold watches, sunglasses and other items by *château*.

However, the economic impact of sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum is not the equivalent of that of Somali migrants in Eastleigh, also known as 'Little Mogadishu', a densely-populated low-income neighbourhood within Nairobi which 'has been transformed, largely by Somali businessmen [Somali but also other African refugees and other migrants], from a residential community to the commercial centre of the Eastlands area, and increasingly much of Nairobi' (Campbell 2006: 402). Just as the future of migrants' presence in Morocco overall was uncertain, so was the future of business ventures by sub-Saharans trying to 'look for themselves' in Taqaddoum. Continued violence, infringement of migrants' rights and overall bad 'conditions' discouraged migrants from staying. Customers and business owners alike were usually concerned with moving 'forward or backward', yet sub-Saharan migrants' input into the economic life of the neighbourhood was persistent.

Conclusion

Sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum had recourse to various livelihood strategies to sustain themselves (e.g. paying rent and food but also buying material for 'attacks' in

[85] My translation.

the borderlands). The majority of low-paid, casual occupations they undertook were often described as 'forced labour' as exemplified by the arduous and precarious conditions they faced when they could find work at *Chad*. It must be stressed that the situation of Taqaddoum's adventurers is not commensurate with that of all sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. For instance, as noted by Kettani and Peraldi, there is a noticeable presence of sub-Saharan students who have stayed in Morocco and are present in other sectors (e.g. telecommunications, media).

Studies focusing on 'inclusive exclusion' when exploring labour relations and migration provide important tools to comprehend broader patterns of economic exploitation for 'illegal' migrants. However, it is important to note how migrants themselves coped with and made sense of their hazardous economic lives. Hardship and 'forced labour' were prominent examples amongst migrants discussing adventure in terms of suffering for the objective (see Chapter 7). It is also crucial to take into account how migrants manage the opportunities they are presented with and also carve some more for themselves. Hence, drawing on a broader anthropological tradition of exploring 'small-scale entrepreneurs' (Hart 1970) this chapter engages with Pickerill's suggestion to approach migrants' work in Morocco as 'informal and entrepreneurial strategies' (2011). Although the term stresses migrants' coping strategies and agency more broadly, in the current context of hostility towards migration across the Mediterranean region, it is potentially damaging and not really useful.

In the last section, this chapter details some economic ventures in Taqaddoum and explores further migrants' quest 'to look for themselves' and 'prepare themselves'. More than simply livelihood strategies, migrants' businesses were tied to their 'objective'; they were embedded in their uncertain and (im)mobile quest for a 'better life'. As means of saving money to move 'forward' or 'backward', migrants' economic ventures were of strategic importance for adventurers navigating an uncertain terrain and often readjusting their 'destinations' (Chapter 4). Fridges and freezers in makeshift restaurants did not ground migrants in Taqaddoum; rather, they were assets which could increase income and be sold or left behind when necessary.

Yet, as illustrated by Christian, some migrants talked of 'looking for themselves' through such businesses in Taqaddoum, at least temporarily. However, obstacles were numerous and business holders were doubly affected by hostile migration politics in

Morocco. Because of strict monetary regulations from the Moroccan government, it was also virtually impossible for migrants to send money home if they could afford it, at least through regular channels. However, the flux of restaurants and hairdressing salons regularly opening and closing is reminiscent of Agier's remarks (see Chapter 2) on the camp as holding the potential to become a *polis* but not reaching it (2002). Sub-Saharans were economically embedded in the neighbourhood of Taqaddoum but the potential for a more sustainable socio-economic integration was not realised fully.

Nevertheless, I am not suggesting that sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco simply moved on when labour conditions were unsatisfying. In 2012, the first migrant workers' trade union in Morocco was set up in partnership with the Moroccan trade union ODT (*Organisation du Travail*): ODT-Travailleurs Immigrés (Democratic Organisation of Labour-Migrant Workers). It aims to improve the situation for documented and undocumented workers in Morocco and it has been advocating for the regularisation of undocumented migrant workers in Morocco since its creation. In Chapter 1, I explored the issue of political mobilisation amongst irregular, sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum. Chapter 7 examines the second component in my informants' explanations about adventure – 'suffering' – in order to explore the basis and limits of trust and solidarity amongst irregular, sub-Saharan migrants living in precarious conditions.

Chapter 7 Suffering and moral conundrums

Sat on a makeshift weight-lifting bench built from construction site materials, Stéphane was preparing a tomato salad. Around him, others sub-Saharan migrants from the same building in Douar Hajja were clearing away their laundry on the sunny roof-terrace to make space for the evening. Stéphane simply said it would be a party for his friend and roommate Estra, so when the latter finally joined us, I wished him a happy birthday. He smiled politely and thanked me. After he had gone, Stéphane explained it was in fact a ceremony in honour of Estra's sister who had recently passed away in Cameroon. Around thirty sub-Saharan migrants, mostly Cameroonian but also Ivoirian, came over. Some brought hashish or beer to complement the large amount of food Stéphane and Marmiton had prepared. Two young Moroccan activists and a French student who had befriended Stéphane and Estra also came. It was the middle of Ramadan, so we ate inside after Picas made a speech and led the migrants in a communal Lord's Prayer. A confident and inspirational speaker, Picas was fit for the job of improvised priest. He stressed that all sub-Saharans gathered there were 'altogether', whatever their origins and religion, to support Estra for the loss of his sister.

Once the prayer call resonated, some people went upstairs to share a few beers in the open air. A Moroccan man from an adjacent terrace cheered and tossed over a plastic bottle filled with homemade *raibi* to contribute to the party, whilst other Moroccan neighbours started a fight downstairs with Picas, no longer in the role of the priest, and other Cameroonians who had begun a game of football in the narrow alleyway. Music was playing loudly inside the room. They were 'doing things like home, like in Cameroon' many told me. Although some were still anxiously waiting to hear from a group of Cameroonians stuck at the bus station on their way to the borderlands (see Chapter 4), the party mood had almost completely taken over from discussions about arduous living conditions in Morocco. One Cameroonian whom I did not know, and who was confused as to who I was, came up to me and improvised a rap:

> What are you going to do for us? We are men, not animals. Do you see how we live? You have built a barrier. How are we going to make it? It is not a life here. But the barrier, we are going to eat it. I do not know the end

> of the world but I am going to get there because we are men. We are a family here. I could not bring anything to Estra because here I am in the buff. I cannot help him. But we are all a family here.

Stéphane always referred to Estra as 'my guy' or 'my person' ever since they had met when he was still living in *L'Embassade*. They had moved together with another two Cameroonians, though the two of them remained close and did things together: sharing food and stories, planning trips up to the borderlands and smoking hashish. Stéphane repeated that Estra was a trustworthy man. One year later, in spring 2014, I visited Boukhalef, a peripheral neighbourhood of Tangier, where many migrants lived in new but unoccupied flats built for Moroccans living abroad. There I found Stéphane living alone, although he and Estra had moved there together the previous year.

Stéphane explained that a Moroccan man in Boukhalef sold him a piece of hashish for 400dh which could be divided into smaller pieces and sold for around 700 to 800dhs back in Rabat. Stéphane entrusted it to Estra, who had to return briefly to Taqaddoum for a job. Estra returned to Tangier without the hashish and only 400dh. When confronted by Stéphane about the 'surplus', Estra could only offer convoluted excuses before he decided to go back to Taqaddoum. Stéphane was hurt:

> If there is a job available [and] he thinks of me, it means he wants to be with me, and for me to benefit. He is my person. But now, about money, I had not categorized him yet. He has made his profit. I cannot trust him. […] I am disappointed. Right now, I do not trust him with money. I will continue spending time with him, to discover his mentality. […] Before trusting someone, you need to discover how someone is from one point to the other. We spend time together, we study one another. […] He took the money. That is life. You need to save yourself because you have a problem? It won't disturb me. But you are incapable of explaining to me where the money is? Then, there is no point. It was 400 dhs. Had it been 200 euros, then knives could have been drawn.

As noted by Cooper and Pratten, 'uncertainty is intertwined with social relations; in some situations social relations create uncertainty, while at other times social relations alleviate uncertainty, and often the equilibrium is held in suspense' (2015: 2). Rather than merely marking highs and lows in the friendship between Estra and Stéphane, the events recalled above illustrate important issues for irregular, Sub-Saharan migrants and their uncertain everyday life. Most of the migrants' time was

spent with other migrants who, whilst experiencing similar conditions of violence and precariousness, were an important source of help and support compared with NGOs short of staff and resources, or far-away relatives.

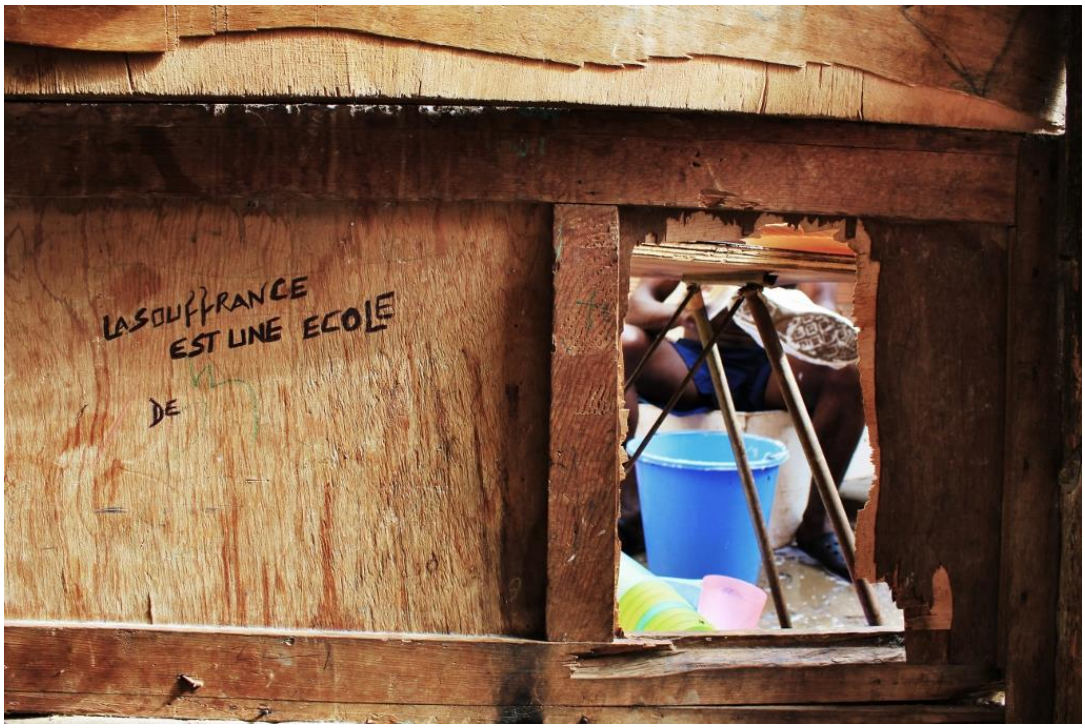

Fig. 74 Graffiti in *L'Embassade*.

Echoing Malkki's observation in the Mishamo refugee camp that 'being a refugee also naturally suggested, even demanded, certain kinds of social conduct and moral stances, while precluding others' (1996: 380), this chapter attempts to sketch 'the social construction and moral imagination' (Malkki 1996: 381) of adventure to explore how solidarity and its limits were articulated in the hazardous and violent conditions experienced by sub-Saharan migrants. Rather than automatically associating migrants' precariousness with either atomized individuals' selfish behaviour as in the case of Turnbull's study of the Ik (1972), or liminal equality and reciprocity as articulated by Turner in his concept of 'communitas' (1969), the present chapter is attentive to what Han, in her analysis of care and violence in Chile, calls 'the difficulties and achievements of being in another's present' (Han 2012: 28). As the Cameroonian rapper quoted above wanted to know, how could people in a precarious condition help one another? What were the dynamics of trust?

Firstly, I explore 'suffering', an essential component to sub-Saharan migrants' definition of adventure, in terms of learning. Then, I discuss how adventure provided migrants, who 'all suffered the same', with opportunities to re-negotiate social relationships during migratory journeys. After examining examples of solidarity amongst sub-Saharan migrants, I explore trust and its limits amongst my informants. Finally, I look at the moral conundrums stemming from migrants' self-representation as adventurers.

Suffering, the right to cross and learning

At *L'Embassade*, in the staircase leading to the rooftop, the wall displayed a partial inscription (Fig. 74) reading '*la souffrance est une école de [la vie]*' (suffering is a school of [life]). Inhabitants of the ghetto ironically commented that 'life' was missing or had been erased. In typical hyperbolic fashion, Eric William would tell me, 'We don't live here, we only live problems'. Discussing adventure in *Le Consulat*, I pointed out that I had left France to look for new opportunities in the UK. Ahmed, pretending to be offended, retorted: 'going from one European country to another? That is not adventure, it is *mésaventure* [literally "misadventure"].' He stressed that, contrary to adventure, there would be no suffering involved in easily crossing borders within Europe. Overhearing us, one of Ahmed's friends urged me to address their suffering: 'when you become a high-ranking executive in your country, tell them that we suffer in our countries and here too.'

Robbins notes how 'the subject living in pain, in poverty, or under conditions of violence or oppression now very often stands at the centre of anthropological work' (2013: 448). For instance, in calling for an 'anthropology of suffering', Davis points to the '*normality of pain*' (1992: 150). Furthermore, Fassin and Rechtman argue that 'trauma has become a major signifier of our age' (2009: xi). Hence, in discussing migrants' suffering, Robbins warns against

> a way of writing in which we do not primarily provide cultural context so as to offer lessons in how lives are lived differently elsewhere, but in which we offer accounts of trauma that make us and our readers feel in our bones the vulnerability we as human beings all share (2013: 455).

For instance, Robbins argues that the depiction of the suffering of a Brazilian woman in Biehl's *Vita* (2005) is articulated less as a critical argument about neoliberalism in

Brazil than as a way for readers 'to realize the shared humanity that links us to others who suffer' (2013: 456).

Providing a different though important criticism, Farmer contends that individual biographies of suffering must be embedded 'in the larger matrix of culture, history and political economy' (1996: 272). Whilst the broader socio-political context is addressed in the Introduction, here I engage with Robbins' recent call for an 'anthropology of the good' and his call 'to explore the different ways people organize their personal and collective lives in order to foster what they think of as good, and to study what it is like to live at least some of the time in light of such a project' (2013: 457). However, in the context of irregular, sub-Saharan migrants, exploring hopes for a better life requires examining suffering.

In discussing his dangerous, failed crossing 'attempts', Perez would often repeat to me: 'after suffering, the reward [*après la souffrance, la récompense*]. […] There is just no success without suffering. Even the richest: if he explains to you how he has acquired his wealth, he will tell you how he has suffered for it. You have to suffer in order to deserve.' Others in Taqaddoum would stress that the horrendous suffering induced by their journey(s) entitled them to a reward: to reach their 'objective', be let into Europe. They had deserved it.[86] For Nottingham, it was about 'karma': 'a man cannot suffer all his life. […] You pay here for the acts you have committed before, you pay before you enter [the EU].' As Scarry has it, when discussing the religious significance of suffering and the body,

> the self-flagellation of the religious ascetic [is] a way of so emphasizing the body that the contents of the world are cancelled and the path is clear for the entry of an unworldly, contentless force. It is in part this world-ridding, path-clearing logic that explains the obsessive presence of pain in the rituals of large, widely shared religions […], that partly explains why the crucifixion of Christ is at the centre of Christianity (1985: 34).

In discussions of suffering, Christian as well as Muslim sub-Saharan migrants would often talk of God. For instance, Mohamoud explained to me that one could endure suffering if and when one trusts that *chance* would eventually be provided by God: 'if you believe this, you will not get tired too much, just a little, but not too much.' Lamine

[86] Similarly, as described in Chapter 4, migrants also made references to other types of moral claims, such as the ones associated with colonial regiments' participation in the two world wars as well as postcolonial interference in African governance.

often jokingly asked me what I had done to deserve being born in France, 'in paradise'. A discussion of my informants' religious beliefs is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather than reiterating migrants' discourses of *chance* and courage (Chapter 5), I want to stress how for migrants suffering also involved moral expectations from Europe.

Reflecting on the concept of 'moral economy', articulated by Thompson in his seminal study of the English working class (1971) and popularized within anthropology by Scott (1976), Fassin highlights its double dimension as economic but also moral since it refers to 'the production, circulation, and appropriation of norms and values, sensibilities, and emotions in contemporary societies' (2012: 10). For instance, in his influential article on compassion and repression, Fassin offers 'a redefinition of the moral economy of our times: a unique combination of policies of order and a politics of suffering, in which the protection of security for the few within the polis is maintained while a compassionate treatment for those within the camps is assured' (2005: 382). In contrast, for the adventurers who portrayed themselves as 'soldiers against life' and refused to 'wait out' the crisis (see Chapter 4), the suffering endured by their uncertain journeys entailed the right 'to enter' and be let in. This is in stark contrast with dominant European discourses whereby suffering, identified as primarily the result of violence from smugglers and their criminal networks, is posited as further justification for more repressive, hence violent, measures (Lutterbeck 2006).

Migrants' claims of deserving to be let in because they suffered illustrate contemporary discourses and practices around what Malkki has called 'the universalism of a bare humanity' (1995b: 11). Indeed, Ticktin highlights 'the role of the suffering body as the best and most legitimate source for claims-making and legal and political recognition' (2014: 276). For instance, in their exploration of law and medicine, Kelly, Harper and Khanna note that 'injury is a legal term par excellence' (2015: 4). Likewise, Kelly's analysis of what kinds of acts count as torture explores 'what can be seen and said, and what has to be ignored, when we understand suffering and cruelty through the legal category of torture' (2011: 4).

Hence, anthropology has provided critical analyses of the interplay of morality and politics in a context of 'violent humanitarianism' (Ticktin 2006) that produces dehistoricised and depoliticised 'anonymous corporeality and speechlessness' (Malkki 1996: 389). Ticktin (2011) scrutinises the politics of care in France to unravel how

migrants' suffering bodies are posited as morally legitimate. In contrast, Han, in her analysis of care and violence in a marginal neighbourhood of Santiago, asserts that 'attending to the ways in which violence and harm are existentially experienced, however, shifts the anthropological exercise' (Han 2012: 23). Before exploring the issue of suffering in trust and solidarity below, I want to examine migrants' portrayal of the experience of suffering as one of learning.

'Suffering is not a bad illness, it strengthens the heart,' Dinar, who had a talent for crisp adages, once told me. When Houdou and I met to discuss his poem on 'hope' (see Chapter 5), he explained that 'if suffering seems to destroy us, let us not forget that it remains a school of wisdom'. Coping with suffering implied valuable learning. Sitting in the 'workshop' – a small concrete storage-room near *Le Consulat* lent by a Moroccan shopkeeper where Perez and others sat on a wooden crate to mend shoes all day long – I chatted with Ivoirian Youssouf who averred:

> With my adventure, I have learned some open-mindedness [*ouverture d'esprit*]. Even if I have not earned money, I have seen a lot of things, a lot of realities. I have touched them. In Ivory Coast, there are people who think that the world ends at the borders of the country. They should come here to see the real realities. Adventure is stuffed with teachings. It stimulates your mind [*ça te forge dans la tête*]. It makes you humble.

Like Youssouf, sub-Saharans would point out the suffering and other lessons that adventure entails, which they described as invaluable for wherever next they would find themselves. Though they were usually vague about details, one recurrent example was learning how to live with little money and make it last. Adventurers discussed learning in terms of '*débrouillardise'*, to make do with meagre means, as illustrated in Chapter 4. Many of the themes of adventure found an echo in western and central African songs, especially in Ivoirian Zouglou songs, often playing in the ghettoes and houses inhabited by sub-Saharan migrants.[87]

Some even described seeking out hardship and suffering. For instance, Estra insisted that he preferred to live in Taqaddoum:

> Taqaddoum is a school of suffering. Taqaddoum is very good for the poor. When you are poor, you know what you have come to get. Suffering gives

[87] Zouglou originated in the Ivory Coast as 'a musical creation of students protesting against their society' (Konate 2002: 777). The repertory of this musical genre is tinged with an emphasis on social problems, including issues related to migration and 'adventure'.

> you the heart to do what you cannot do. You think about how to pay your rent, how to eat, and go *shock* for *mbeng*.[88]

Similarly, Malkki notes that in the Tanzanian Mishamo camp, many Hutu refugees 'were of the opinion that embracing instead of escaping hardships was wise as the knowledge of difficulties would teach and empower people, making them worthier and more able to reclaim the homeland' (1996: 381).

As noted by Lambek, irony rises readily 'in the experience of sufferers' (2003: 5). People laughed at stories of migrants coming back wounded and stories of others being beaten up. They laughed about their own injuries, and teased others about theirs. Feeling uncomfortable with such conversations at first, I shared my uneasiness with Eric William. 'Shall we always just cry then?' he answered. They did not laugh about people who died though. I am not suggesting here that adventurers were purposefully seeking grievous bodily harm during 'attempts' because of valuable teachings in their quest for the objective. As some Cameroonian informants often put it to me, 'Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die'.

Discussing hope and suffering for adventurers in *L'Embassade* shortly before its downfall, Houdou asserted that 'life is a struggle' (*la vie est un combat*). He recalled what his grandfather used to tell him: 'You cannot become a man if you do not face the obstacles. This is how we recognize and become a man'. As noted by Bredeloup, the adventure is often portrayed, especially in western stories, as a rite of passage, a youthful whim 'on the way to independence and adult manhood' (2013: 178). However, challenging the naturalized link between youth and adventure, she argues that youth also 'informs us about the condition of dependence of the individual, about its absence of autonomy towards the social orders of the family and the state' (2013: 178). When probed, Houdou quickly asserted, 'If we have taken the road, it is not to become a man. It is because we hoped to find a place where we could express ourselves freely and exploit our talent'. In addition to the criticism offered by Bredeloup, I would point out that my informants often drew connections between hardship and suffering endured in home countries, Morocco, and what they expected to live through in the future. Continuing our conversation, Houdou added

[88]*Mbeng*, which many described as originating from Cameroonian slang, amongst sub-Saharan migrants means to enter Europe successfully.

> During adventure, we have fought and overcome [obstacles], until today we continue to overcome them, like we used to do [back home]. We also know that if one day we manage to cross to Europe, it will be the same thing. Life is not an eternal happiness. […] You have to be strong. [Life] is not an eternal suffering either. We can fight to find a right balance [*un juste milieu*].

Conceiving of adventure as simply a transition stage or a rite of passage is too simplistic. Nevertheless, adventure entailed some elements of transformation. This was first and foremost evident in the profusion of nicknames amongst migrants. For instance, many of my Christian informants were known by a Muslim name amongst Moroccan neighbours and employers. They insisted this would ensure better treatment. Further, migrants often had a variety of nicknames, some acquired in the home country, others during the adventure. Some migrants reserved their 'real' first name only to people they 'trusted and respected'. For instance, Stéphane let people call him by his nickname Willy, but preferred his closest friends to call him by his first name.

Whilst this was discussed as *débrouillardise*, some talked of an opportunity to become someone else in adventure, or at least to present yourself differently. Ivoirian Dramen from *Le Consulat* explained that 'in adventure you can become whoever you want'. Sometime later, as I was discussing the same topic with another inhabitant of *Le Consulat*, Ali Sniper retorted, 'Here nobody knows anything about anyone. We are not even sure what people's real names are. Maybe he is not called Dramen'. He added, 'In adventure, you are free, you can pick up your bag and just leave. Nobody can say anything. For your name, it is the same thing, you can say you are from Congo or Ivory Coast, you have no country'. This emphasis on freedom recurred in discussions of adventure, and echoes the emphasis on packing up and leaving without being accountable to anyone (see Chapter 4). However, as pointed out by Picas, the practice of concealing one's real identity could be dangerous since it was difficult to ascertain the identity of the migrants who had died in the borderlands or needed urgent help from their families.

Suffering and blackness

At Marmiton's restaurant, I often witnessed good-humoured arguments between Eric William who is Bassa, Picas who is Yaounde and Mireille, a Bamileke woman who lived with Marmiton. Mireille would say the Bassa always claim to have been the force

behind Independence, that they practice witchcraft, sending monsoons and diseases to people. Eric William, looking at me, would retort that Bamileke are stingy. After one such conversation, I asked about tensions amongst Cameroonian migrants in the light of the discrimination suffered by the Bamileke minority ethnic group back home (see Doho 2006). Eric William replied, 'These are senseless problems [*des faux problems*]. In Cameroon yes, but here in adventure, it is less, we form one family. We help one another. We get to know each other. We see that life is easy [between Bassa and Bamileke], we go forward.' Mireille agreed and started teasing Eric William again.

My enquiry about tensions amongst sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum, was met with the claim that adventure taught my informants that they were 'all the same' in spite of the tensions that existed in their home countries. They would emphasize that life in Morocco was 'hard for all blacks', recalling episodes of violence and racism, such as those described in Chapter 3, and highlighting their pursuit of the 'objective' which meant that they all 'suffered the same'. Amongst sub-Saharan migrants, the *topoi* of pain and suffering were ubiquitous in conversations which often started with 'Morocco is hard' (*le Maroc, c'est dure*) and usually ended with 'we are together' (*On est ensemble*). Along with the 'objective' (see Chapter 4), suffering was one of the bases of being an 'adventurer'. It provided a collective identity amongst migrants of diverse nationalities who shared similar, arduous living conditions in derelict ghettoes, who stood side by side at *château* in search of low-paid work, and who organised collective crossing attempts in the borderlands. They also shared the same vernacular of adventure. For instance, although *mbengis* refers to a sub-Saharan who has made it to Europe in Cameroonian (*Camfranglais*) and Ivoirian (*nushi*) street slangs, it was widely used amongst all sub-Saharans. As explained in Chapter 4, *boza*, meaning 'entering' in Cameroonian slang, was used by adventurers for overcoming the fences and the sea to get into Spain. *Tranquilo* ('quiet' in Spanish) came to designate hide-outs in the forests. The nickname given to places where migrants sought work, *Chad*, was said to have originated from adventurers, though its etymology is unclear.

As argued by Malkki in her discussion of the contingent processes of re-working categorical identities amongst both camp and city Hutu refugees in Tanzania, 'working in social settings of displacement invites in a very direct way the further questioning

of concepts of culture, society, and community as bounded territorialized units' (1995b: 2). As illustrated above, suffering and recognizing that other migrants 'suffered the same' contributed to the collective identity as adventurers amongst sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum. However, in discussing the reorientation of the anthropological gaze away from physically bounded spaces, Amit argues that 'collective identities […], whether defined in terms of nation, ethnicity, occupation or political movement, are all too often invoked to fill the vacuum of location once filled (literally) by place' (Amit and Rapport 2002: 3). For instance, denouncing the uncritical use of Anderson's concept of 'imagined community' (1983) in migration studies, Hage ironically notes that there often seems to be little community but 'a lot of imagination instead, usually the imagination of the researchers' (2005: 468).

Rather than claiming that adventurers reflect 'any idea of community as self-evident' (Alleyne 2002: 602), I follow Cohen who, in his discussion of the symbolic construction of 'community', seeks 'not lexical meaning, but *use*' (1985: 12), that is, not normative definition but actual usage of the concept. Hence, in the next section I return to explore in concrete terms amongst adventurers, 'the ways in which self is implicated with others' (Han 2012: 24). Beforehand, I want to stress that I am not offering the term 'adventurer' as another addition to the plurality of terms Grillo (2007) has gathered under the appellation 'betwixt and between'. Indeed, I concur that

> whether referring to transnationals, translocals, cosmopolitans, hybrids, creoles, *hommes des confins*, postnationals or anything else, we have to be aware that there are different personal and institutional subject positionings *vis-à-vis* nation, ethnicity, culture and class, that multicultural and intercultural practices (sometimes perhaps polyphonic, syncretic hybrid) may take many different forms, and that there is no magical state, accessible through transmigration, which allows people readily to escape national, ethnic, and cultural rootedness (Grillo 2007: 212-3).

Yet, I argue that if adventure did not offer an escape from pre-existing social ties, it allowed for the opportunity to renegotiate them. To do so, I draw on Agier and his analysis of the Kenyan Dadaab refugee camp, already mentioned in the discussion of ghettoes as transformative and resilient spaces (see Chapter 2). Agier asserts that '*camps create identity*, both ethnic and non-ethnic, even more so than they reproduce, maintain or reinforce ethnicity' (2002: 333). Thus he contrasts Malkki's distinction between the cosmopolitanism of Hutu refugees in the city of Kigoma and historical-

national thought of Hutu refugees in the Mishamo camp (Malkki 1995b) with criticisms by Kibreab (1999) over the deterritorialisation of identities. Highlighting that camps are dynamic and relational, he points to 'the *bricolage* of novel identities, the strengthening of particularisms, anti-ethnic behaviours and inter-ethnic exchanges' (*ibid*) in the Dadaab camp.

Despite some of my informants' assertions that there were no tensions amongst Cameroonians, Pierre-Marie from Caritas often noted how much migrants 'took it out on the Bamileke'. Altercations along national or ethnic lines at the nearby Caritas centre were not uncommon. Serious fighting amongst migrants, often along national lines, occasionally occurred in Taqaddoum. A personal feud between a Guinean and a Nigerian led to increased tension between the two communities, and indeed the death of a Guinean. Seemingly in contradiction with his recurrent assertion about migrants' 'togetherness', Picas also lamented the fact that sub-Saharans could be 'more racist than Moroccans' against other sub-Saharans. Preconceived ideas about other sub-Saharan nationalities were rife, often between Central African and Western African (*les west-afs*) migrants. I often listened to Cameroonians complaining that Malians were weak and would work for almost no money. Two nationalities consistently suffered scorn from most other sub-Saharan migrants in Taqaddoum: Senegalese and Nigerians. Senegalese, often accused of not demonstrating enough solidarity with other nationalities, were resented as 'privileged' by many migrants because of the longstanding relationship between Morocco and Senegal, as illustrated by the socio-religious links with the Sufi order *Tijāniyyah* (Triaud and Robinson 2005). Depicted as violent and disingenuous by other migrants, usually in stories discussing sub-Saharan violence in the borderlands, Nigerians were often avoided altogether; this tension also pointed to a divide between Anglophone and Francophone migrants.

Yet, sub-Saharan migrants did not always strictly stay in houses organized according to nationalities. When questioned as to why this was the case, informants replied that it was preferable to stay with people who 'understood each other'. Clement, a Francophone Nigerian, lived in *L'Embassade* with mostly Francophone Cameroonians. He explained to me that his mother was Francophone Cameroonian and, although he had grown up in Nigeria, he felt closer and preferred to live with Cameroonians. However, 'understanding one another' went beyond mere linguistic

preferences and encompassed broader cultural or ethnic affinities, as well as personal ties. Mobilizing one's 'social capital […] *in purposive actions*' (Lin 1999: 35; original emphasis) was a prerequisite for the adventure. If one did not know any other co-national, one could appeal to other links. Although Patrick, from the Central African Republic, was sometimes critical of 'noisy' Cameroonians, he often talked of cultural affinities amongst Central Africans. The fact that Cameroon and the Central African Republic 'shared a border' explained why he briefly stayed in *L'Embassade* and spent most of his time at Sammy's. A shared ethnicity could also be appealed to. For instance, in Douar Hajja, there was a trans-national ghetto of Fula migrants. Religion was never appealed to as grounds for commonality and understanding amongst my informants, although Picas and Eric William mentioned the existence of Nigerian ghettoes divided along ethnic and religious lines. In the absence of more straightforward ties, Central and Western Africans in Taqaddoum simply appealed to a common 'blackness' and similarities in their living conditions in Morocco marked by suffering.

Aron provided a striking example of how social relationships were renegotiated when necessary. From the Ivory Coast, Aron called himself a Burkinabe. When I tried to probe whether Aron and his family had suffered from the articulation of 'Ivoirity' (Marshall-Fratani 2006) during the civil war, he categorically dismissed the idea, asserting that he held an Ivoirian passport, and that in Ivory Coast he was considered to be an Ivoirian by everyone. After living in Burkina Faso for a year with relatives, he went on the adventure; he explained how he alternated between Burkinabe and Ivoirian travelling companions:

> In Algeria I saw Burkinabe brothers. It was me who chose to go with them. The Ivoirians there were sleeping in a hole; I am not a rat. Burkinabe consider me as a Burkinabe not an Ivoirian. I am with other Burkinabe when there are Burkinabe. Otherwise, I continue with the Ivoirians. I walk with both nationalities. It depends on the men, if it does not suit me to stay with some people, I move to the other community. I move back and forth between the two. People cannot prevent me from doing so. I belong to both countries, both countries belong to me.

Hence, using their diverse social capital, migrants were able to move from one group to another as ghettoes opened or closed, people moved on, or fights broke out. They often had a wide circle of acquaintances acquired during their tortuous journeys to

Morocco. Adventure did not imply an *ex novo*, utopian cosmopolitan identity. Rather, it provided a space for *débrouillardise* where sociality amongst 'black' migrants 'suffering all the same' could be re-negotiated in the quest for the 'objective'.

Solidarity, trust and their limit

As Collyer has it, 'although most migrants were travelling alone, the social networks they created and maintained with individuals they encountered on their journey were of vital importance' (2007: 679). Yet, he notes that 'given the tenuous bonds with these spontaneous social networks and their desperate situations' (2007: 682), solidarity had its limits. However, whilst Collyer is right to point out precariousness, labelling such networks as 'spontaneous' obscures the fragile processes by which solidarity and trust amongst adventurers are established.

When I asked Stéphane why he was giving a few dirhams to another migrant, he replied, 'Because I know his situation. He suffers like me. It could be me asking [instead of him]'. Help was justified in terms of knowing about, and sharing, another's 'condition'. Mohamoud also illustrated to me how recognizing each other's suffering pushed people into helping one another. He recalled an incident on a construction site:

> One day an old African man was working on erecting a pole. He poured the cement in but the pole was not fixed well. It started moving. This is not our job, we are not paid to do these things, but I could see it was not right. It is the work of the master craftsman, but I am not paid for this, so I don't get involved. After the old man finished, one Moroccan came and saw that it was not right and he started insulting the old man. He called him a son of a bitch. There was a younger black there. He knows the old man. They were in the forest together a long time, they suffered a lot and they came to Rabat together. They want to leave soon again together. He saw that and punched the Moroccan in the face.

Mohamoud also illustrated how solidarity was not only a matter of financial help. In the rooms occupied by smaller numbers of migrants who had moved in together, food and other goods were often shared. Stéphane often repeated to me that either he or Estra would buy what was needed for a communal meal, depending on who went home first. However, they often complained their other two flatmates never bought food for everyone. In more over-crowded foyer rooms such as in *Le Consulat*, there was sometimes a cooking rota. Taking turns, migrants would buy food and cook the daily collective meal for the room or the whole foyer, usually in the evening, to

ensure that ‘everyone will have eaten at least once’. Migrants would all contribute a few dirhams. However, those who could not pay ‘would always eat’. They would not be required to pay back the money, but simply to start contributing as soon as they could. Such arrangements did not exist in *L’Embassade*, where people had set up businesses and sold food.

I am not suggesting here that solidarity simply increased as one moved away from hierarchical ghettoes. The people migrants felt closer to in Taqaddoum were not always those they shared a room with. Also, larger ghettoes such as the one where Malian Abderhamed was in convalescence and living for free, as described in Chapter 4, were the loci of forms of solidarity which would have been harder to implement in smaller houses. There the cost of feeding and looking after a companion would have been shared amongst a small number of inhabitants with greater difficulty.

Another important expression of solidarity amongst migrants was the sharing of information about police movements, events in the borderlands and work opportunities. For instance, as explored in Chapter 6, it was highly preferable to establish an enduring relationship with Moroccan bosses than standing every day outside *château* in the hope of getting work. That way, one could wait and expect phone-calls, usually with better working conditions. This also implied that migrants would be able to pass on information about work to others, often people they shared a room with since they would then be able to pay their share of the rent. For instance, Lamine often struggled to pay his share because he looked so frail he was never picked for work. He had to rely on his roommates for help , such as Papou who, when too tired to work, would send Lamine to his boss so that he would be able to earn at least a day’s wage and contribute to the rent.

Helping others so they could afford to contribute financially was an important motive. However, there were seemingly more altruistic instances of solidarity. For instance, Mohamoud recalled that when they finished the heavy work on the construction site mentioned above, the boss wanted to sack the old man.

> It was because the forced-labour was over. Now [the work] was easy so they did not want him anymore. It is always like this. They wanted to get rid of the old man. I said I would leave if they did that. But the old man said he was going to go anyway.

In protesting, Mohamoud had nothing to gain but risked losing a job with a Moroccan contractor with whom he had established a relationship. Later on, Mohamoud secured a more permanent job through a construction site manager he had worked for a long time. Mohamoud became the guardian outside his villa and no longer slept in Taqaddoum but stayed all week in Medina. Yet, he would spend his weekly day off in Taqaddoum, in the room he used to sleep in with other Guineans. Mohamoud kept on paying a share of the rent and usually brought food every week for others because he knew what 'conditions' they lived in and his job provided for meals and a bed.

When Marmiton was about to return temporarily to Cameroon, I asked her whether she would keep on using her nickname there. In French, Marmiton means 'scullion' but refers more broadly to someone for whom cooking is a hobby or a profession; the term is also positively endowed with notions of hospitality. In her restaurant, Marmiton often offered refuge to people coming back from the forest who had nowhere to go. She also regularly gave food for free to people in need, modestly stating she did not have the heart to say no. For her, the nickname 'Marmiton' meant 'someone looking after others.' She said she would not use this nickname back in Cameroon, because what 'Marmiton' stood for was 'for the adventure.' She explained she would not need it back home where migrants had circles of friends and families and thus did not require help.

When migrants helped others, they often did it on the basis of shared 'conditions' or 'suffering'. When asked why he was always so helpful to everyone around him, Lamine would add that it was 'because of God' and would mention the Islamic precepts of charity he had been taught. In contrast, Houdou would point out that the adventure could bring the worst out of people and, somehow mirroring common anti-migration statements in Morocco and beyond, that amongst adventurers there were many 'criminals' who had fled their home countries for serious crimes and who remained dangerous. However, as Stéphane often stressed, whether migrants demonstrated solidarity or selfishness with others in adventure was a matter of 'education'. But whilst migrants did not become radically new moral agents, adventure did entail specific moral issues in that shared suffering was set as simultaneously the basis and the limit of trust. As decried by Jiménez, 'trust and social crises are presented as natural enemies, the former rushing out when the latter draw in' (2011: 177).

Interactions amongst sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco illustrates the fallacy of equating precariousness with a lack of trust and solidarity.

Migrants in Taqaddoum often said that those sharing a room ought to 'live like a family'. However, sharing a room did not necessarily entail trust. As Perez pointed out to me, 'trust comes with time, from the others' actions in front of you [*avec les actes que l'on pose devant toi*]'. He would stress that it could come 'from sharing a room but you can share a room with someone and not trust him'. In Taqaddoum, overcrowded accommodation meant enforced intimacy for migrants as they often had to share a small mattress. At *Le Consulat*, Ivoirian migrants repeatedly claimed that they knew who had money and who did not, since it was impossible to hide it. Hence, whenever a communal meal was prepared, they thought they could tell whether someone was lying or not when he claimed he could not contribute. Those who lied and breached trust in such cases could be refused food at the next communal meal.

Amongst migrants in Taqaddoum, trust stemmed from living together, from experiencing hardship and suffering collectively and how people behaved. In his discussion of trust, Möllering argues that 'its point of departure is the experiencing (*Erleben*) of our life-world which we *interpret* as the reality to which our trust relates' (2001: 412). Migrants' trusting one another was grounded in mutual recognition of the ability to cope with suffering and the difficult conditions inherent to the journeys. As advocated by Houdou, adventurers should not weasel out and 'give up in the face of suffering.' Sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum often discussed this in terms of 'having the right mentality [*mentalité*].' This was loosely defined as upholding a positive attitude, displaying courage and strength in the face of adversity and uncertainly, and overcoming difficulties rather than giving up; this expression was also used when discussing *chance* and 'not going mad' (see Chapter 5).

When discussing housing arrangements, 'understanding one another' was usually articulated in terms of 'sharing the same mentality', posed as a pre-requisite by migrants for moving in together in a room (when they could afford the choice). One way of finding out about the mentalities of others was through shared experiences. It was common to find migrants from different parts of sub-Saharan Africa living together after having shared various perilous ordeals on their way to Morocco or in the forests near the Spanish enclaves. If recognising a common suffering was essential to

self-identification as adventurers, 'sharing the same mentality' was crucial to ensure trust. A recurrent example was when migrants highlighted that it was necessary to attempt crossing the Mediterranean on an inflatable boat with people you 'trusted', people who had 'the right mentality'. In concrete terms, this referred to people who would not give up paddling in the middle of the sea.

Emphatic about the importance of intimacy, Perez would talk of Dramen, whom he called 'my guy' (*mon gars*), and with whom he shared everything. He added that they shared the same bed in the foyer, and that they had been in the forest together. However, such relationships based on suffering and a shared mentality were precarious. Eventually, Dramen left again for the forest and made the crossing whilst Perez stayed behind. When I came back after the end of my fieldwork, I found him living with a Cameroonian called Zizou who was his new 'guy'. He stressed they had shared time together in the forest before and talked of how close they felt. The special bonds forged amongst migrants did not prevent people from moving on, or in the case of Estra and Stéphane, from breaking mutual trust. As Han puts it, 'setting aside a picture of all-or-nothing social bonds allows us to appreciate that concrete relations are constantly being achieved, and also failing' (2012: 234). Journeys, which often lasted far longer than expected, saw the emergence of new relationships. For instance, talking about love, Pierre-Marie from Caritas complained that this aspect of migration was very important yet often forgotten. At Caritas, Pierre-Marie saw many mixed couples from different sub-Saharan countries and could see teenagers flirting. 'First love in Morocco, that is not banal,' he said.

Perez, who fancied himself as a bit of a womanizer, constantly talked about seducing sub-Saharan women in Taqaddoum. Chatting with Mamadou, the Guinean carpenter near *L'Embassade*, Perez told us about his latest misadventures with a Gabonese woman in Douar Hajja. Whilst sanding a wooden window frame, Mamadou kept his usual jovial expression but disagreed on relationships during adventure: 'How can you keep running and looking behind your shoe at the same time?' he asked Perez. One of my informants, who was married and left his family back home, was in a relationship with another woman in Taqaddoum. He explained that they kept each other company until she managed to cross to Europe. However, rather than being simply transitory, such relationships had the potential to be more long-lasting. For

instance, Dinar and Anastasia came separately to Morocco and both gave up on the idea of crossing to Spain after multiple aborted attempts. They moved in together and set up a restaurant. I often listened to them gently bickering with one another about splitting up if their plans about the future differed. However, they were planning together to save money and return to Cameroon where Anastasia would open up a beauty salon and Dinar would buy a taxi. Shortly after I finished my fieldwork, they went back to Cameroon together.

Möllering laments the fact that the issue of uncertainty is neglected in most studies of trust which too often focus on functional properties. Drawing on the notion of faith in Simmel's analysis of trust (1950b: 318), he argues that 'the mental leap of trust (from interpretation to expectation) needs to be enabled by *suspension*: the bracketing of the unknowable which represents a defining aspect of the nature of trust' (2001: 417). Amongst adventurers who looked for *chance* to escape their hazardous everyday life, trust was founded on mutual recognition of similar 'conditions' and 'a common mentality' (i.e. coping with suffering) but making the 'leap' to trust another adventurer could prove ill-advised.

Somehow anticipating criticism of his own behaviour Estra explained to me in Douar Hajja what 'to shock one's percentage [*choquer son pourcentage*]', an expression often heard in Taqaddoum, meant:

> It means that you have to suffer alone. […] You are alone, good or bad. […] If something is good or bad, it is for yourself. You and others leave the country together, but at some point you have to split. Not because you want to. God splits you. The money you have in your pocket cannot be enough for three people; you are obliged to leave alone. You can come together, but to each one their route [*chacun sa route*]. You have the same goal but each one is obliged to find his way.

For him adventure meant 'first the foremost [*l'aventure c'est d'abord le d'abord*]' as migrants need to provide for themselves first, before— if they have the good will,— they help others in similar hardship. He added:

> We have discovered the *d'abord* here in Morocco We are ten travelling together as a commando [but] three get lost, they walk slowly. You arrive [at the fence] and have the possibility to cross. You are not going to say 'we have to wait for the three'. You are obliged to *mbeng*. You need people with strength, warriors, those with energy. You have got all the material ready, but three got lost. The forest is not a place for sleeping. Each

> morning created by God the police turn up. You have to shock *mbeng* or you get caught. You don't waste *mbeng* because of one person.

As illustrated by Estra, adventure implied cooperation (e.g. travelling together to reach a common objective); however, trust and solidarity amongst migrants had limits since one had to think of oneself and one's objective. The 'right mentality' (e.g. overcoming suffering) was both the basis and the limit of solidarity and trust since in the face of opportunities to overcome hardship alone, one should grab them. Similarly, Cameroonians often used the word *pontiac*, a Cameroonian street term my informants defined as meaning 'personal', 'what is not to be shared'. Migrants often shared scarce resources, but when they could not or did not want to share something, they called it *pontiac*. In adventure, *pontiac* was understandable and not threatening for others.

In contrast with the injunction 'not to waste *mbeng'*, Stéphane was concerned with 'not spoiling others' *mbeng*.' As mentioned above, when Stéphane discussed Estra's actions, he stressed that he would have not been upset if Estra had explained to him that he just needed some of the money for a personal issue, but he resented the lies, and thought he could not trust him with money. Furthermore, as Stéphane pointed out things could have been much more serious had it been a more substantial amount of money. Echoing Estra's words above, Stéphane felt that 'one should not spoil someone else's *mbeng* [*Il ne faut pas gâter le mbeng des autres*]'. This is where migrants in Taqaddoum drew the line of what was morally permissible in adventure. If spoiling your *mbeng* because of others was the limit of solidarity, endangering someone else's *chance*, ruining their *mbeng*, was immoral.

When I met Stéphane in Boukhalef, he showed me the building where Cédric, a young sub-Saharan, fell from the top floor and died, an incident which sparked further tensions in Tangier (Yabiladi 05-12-2013). He said Cédric had been pushed by the Moroccan police during a raid. Aside from being angry with the police, he was disappointed with the behaviour of Serge, a Cameroonian migrant who used to live in *L'Embassade* too. Stéphane had often complained about Serge's selfishness; if Serge was not around eating Stéphane's food, it meant that he had received some money and was keeping away not to share it. Yet, Stéphane enjoyed his company. He shared what he had with Serge, helped him occasionally when he had nowhere to stay, but he knew where he stood with him and did not expect anything. Stéphane was upset with Serge

since he had seen him leaving Cédric's building in Boukhalef with a large package one evening, shortly before Cédric realized his inflatable zodiac had been stolen. Although he could not prove it, Stéphane was certain Serge had stolen the zodiac. He went over the most likely course of events had Serge not stolen the zodiac:

> Cédric would have passed to Europe. Or he would have been caught and been deported. He would have stayed in Taqaddoum to rest and not been in Tangier during the raids. Because Serge stole his zodiac, he stayed. Now he is dead. If [Serge] is a man, it is going to weigh on him [*ça va le juger*].

Breaching trust and endangering others could have dramatic repercussions for migrants. More than someone being *pontiac*, migrants in Taqaddoum resented the figure of *noka*, a term from Cameroonian street slang which designates someone who destroys or betrays what others do. Another recurrent expression was '*boxer le polo*', whereby *boxer* means spoiling, or destroying, and *polo* designates a favourable situation or place.[89] As mentioned by Perez and Stéphane, migrants were attentive to others' 'acts' and 'mentality'. Calling someone a *noka*, or a *boxer de polo*, generally referred to behaviour and actions in the forests which could have endangered other migrants, thus illustrating 'the dark side of intimacy' (Kelly and Thiranagama 2010: 13). Indeed, 'intimate relationships create vulnerability and anxiety as well as friendship and support. The very people we think we know best and with whom we share the most can do the most damage and turn unexpectedly' (*ibid*: 13). Similarly, in his analysis of contemporary practices of witchcraft, Geschiere notes that 'the very ambiguity of intimacy – comforting yet at the same time inherently dangerous – means that trust can never be an ontological certainty' (2013: ix).

Pellé, a Cameroonian migrant from *L'Embassade*, explained to me how he and other migrants found out about two *nokas* living in the forest near Nador within their group of over a hundred migrants. After a series of violent encounters with Moroccan auxiliary forces (the *Alis*) and following thwarted attempts at the border as well as dawn raids in the exact locations of the informal camps, migrants returning from deportation to Oujda sat down and discussed the possibility that their group hosted migrants who collaborated with the Spanish *Guardia Civil*. At the time, mobile phones were forbidden in the forest camps because of such issues, but they discovered that

[89] In adventure, *polo* was also a synonym for *tranquilo*.

two Cameroonians were hiding mobile phones and using them to inform an officer in the *Guardia Civil.* They were promised a safe crossing after providing information about ten attempts. Pellé outlined the situation:

> We proceeded to the judgement. […] We had to tie them up because people's lives were in danger. People are shot when they get to the fence. One was weak and confessed. […] The other one did not want to speak. We beat him up. Then, we found the same number in the phone, and he kept lying. We tied him well, made a fire and burnt his soles with a burning piece of wood. In the end, he confessed and said he had been doing it. Then, we understood 'it is you who gets children killed here'. We kept the phones and freed them.

Pellé's tale of betrayal and summary justice in the forest highlights the violence and reprisals that were justified when informers harmed other migrants. This particular episode happened in 2007, at a time of intense and incessant police movements in the borderlands. After this period, migrants who had lived in the forests and whom I met in Taqaddoum were keen to stress that such violence amongst migrants would no longer occur. Yet, when I briefly returned to Morocco in 2014, they told new tales of *nokas* and their ordeals. Initial announcements of a new politics of migration in Morocco in 2013 (see Conclusion) were followed by intense and deadly police actions in the borderlands. Migrants also reported new stories of collaboration with the Spanish and Moroccan authorities with the promise of safe passage. One Cameroonian, caught near Melilla, was tied and tortured with burning plastic bags. He escaped to Rabat where people he used to know refused to welcome him because of his actions.

Migrants in Taqaddoum were sometimes concerned that I might be a *noka* who would pass on information to European and Moroccan authorities; there was also concern that I would '*box* their *polo'* by publishing pictures of their living conditions which would be seen by families and friends in their home countries. On the other hand, they were troubled by the positive images published on social media of adventurers as successful heroes (see Chapter 4) who overcame obstacles; these were also seen to mislead their families and possibly encourage people to go on the adventure because of misinformation. Whilst thus far I have been exploring relationships amongst adventurers who refer to themselves as 'a family', I now focus

on the relationship between migrants and their actual families in the countries of origin, and explore the moral dilemma surrounding self-representation for adventurers.

Shame and deceit

The ceremony organized to commemorate the death of Estra's sister, described above, can be seen as a 'rite of solidarity' (Mills 1999). In her study of Thai rural migrants' activism as urban workers, Mills examines how 'some members of a labor force deemed largely "unorganizable" because of age, rural origin and geographic mobility, are reworking these same identities as resources for collective action rather than as barriers to it' (1999: 177). In particular, she explores how 'labor activists employ a conventional Buddhist merit-making ceremony – a ritual through which workers more commonly demonstrate their loyalty to home communities – to enlist the commitment and financial support of fellow migrants towards collective action as wage workers' (1999: 185). Similarly, the ceremony for Estra's sister, drawing on elements that participants associated with 'how it is done back home', simultaneously focused on solidarity and support amongst migrants, as well as on the importance of the links between adventurers and their families.

As described in Chapter 4, adventure was described as the quest for an objective, loosely defined as finding one's life. The objective was also intended as bettering living conditions for relatives back home; Collyer states that 'reaching Europe was seen as a guarantee of securing a regular income that would support them' (2007: 671). Stéphane was an orphan and many of my informants in Taqaddoum, like Perez, had lost at least one parent. Stéphane often talked about 'making it' for his sisters he had left behind. Others, like Patrick, had left a wife and children behind. The call of the adventure could be impromptu or involve lengthier preparations. Only one of my informants, Guinean Dialou who lived in the same house as Lamine, illustrated what Stark and Bloom, in their description of the new economics of labour migration, label a 'mutually beneficial contractual arrangement' (1985: 174) between a migrant and their family. Dialou had been sent out by his uncle to secure a football contract. He would train and rest whilst his family provided the money he needed to live. However, he had no choice in where to go, and he left Morocco when his uncle decided he should try in a different country. Dialou explained to me that it was his uncle who decided on the terms of his adventure. In contrast, most migrants left without telling

people or despite families' attempts at dissuading them, only ringing them to receive their resigned advice and blessing after having crossed one border or more.

Whilst in Morocco and Taqaddoum, my informants received little, if any, financial help from their families. Perez occasionally received a little sum from his younger brother studying in Ivory Coast. Many said they refused to take money from their families, or often did so with shame, since they were 'aware of the conditions back home'. Yet, money was a sensitive matter and on the few occasions I met some of my informants outside the Western Union next to *château*, they would mutter some excuse about picking up money on behalf of a friend.

In fact, migrants had little or irregular contact with families, whom Collyer refers to as 'absent social networks' (2007: 682). Phoning was expensive and people in home countries did not always have ready access to the internet like migrants in Taqaddoum (when they could afford going to the *cyber*). Sitting in a room with young Cameroonians in the building where Dinar's restaurant was located, one of the migrants received a missed call. He said it was his aunty who was probably keen to find out how he was doing. By giving her a missed call back, he intended to say that he was well. However, his aunt gave another missed call right away. 'She has not understood what I meant, but I have no credit to ring her back,' the Cameroonian youth lamented.

However, families and relatives were not completely 'absent'. As detailed in Chapter 1, when migrants' association ALECMA shot a video of Cameroonian migrant Clément dying in the forest around Nador, they titled the video after the inscription on his shirt: 'Number 9'. Picas explained to me that many migrants considered themselves the 'Number 9' of their families: the strikers out there to score goals for them. Regardless of whether they had received help from their families to leave or during their journey, all felt a deep sense of duty towards their relatives. Reaching the objective was important for the adventurer and those left behind.

As noted by Han, it is crucial to consider '*how* the self is enmeshed in relations. That is, the self is simultaneously enmeshed in different relations that entail different demands and desires' (2012: 20). Discussing social relationships amongst irregular sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, Collyer notes that

> the geographies of social networks were extremely significant; there were those they travelled with, those they had left at home, and those they were

> perhaps going to join and those who were elsewhere. In addition were all of the various contacts with Moroccan society, or the citizens of other countries they had travelled through (2007: 675-676).

Not spoiling one's *mbeng* was necessary in order to be able to respond to the multiple expectations and demands from families at home. In *L'Embassade,* some of my informants described how they dreamed about Europe but also about their children and relatives at home. Pressure was high and some explained that they tried to stop thinking about families and their expectations, in order not to 'go mad'.

Adventurers often felt ashamed about repeated failure to cross but also the conditions they were living in. For instance, Aziz from *Le Consulat* often told me his mother would not believe it if she saw him sitting on a wooden crate mending dirty old shoes. Many felt ashamed about having recourse to begging or at the state of the houses they lived in. They were torn when it came to explaining the difficulties and hardships (e.g. the attempts in the forests) to their families. Many sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum did not want to 'tell the truth' for fear of worrying family members who already had many problems to cope with, including financial pressure stemming from the adventurers' departure as well as their demands for support. Yet, others explained how necessary it was to tell what was really happening in the event of needing help (e.g. falling gravely ill or being seriously wounded). When Cyriaque lost his leg after being deported to the desert near Algeria, he made me phone his family because they would not believe him. If migrants did not explain what was happening to them, how could their families believe them when they needed help? The right balance of information for families was tricky. Patrick worked quite regularly and could have afforded to phone his wife and children in the Central African Republic more often. He explained that although he would prefer to speak to them, he limited his phone calls to once a month because he was worried his wife would think he could afford to send more money home.

Sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum often took pictures of themselves, well-dressed, in affluent neighbourhoods of Rabat. A Malian man from *Le Consulat* met me in Medina to take pictures for his Facebook page. He came with at least seven layers of clothing, despite the scorching heat, and proceeded to take different pictures around

some of the well-known sites in Rabat. He would take off one layer each time to make it look like the pictures had been taken on different days.

When asked about such practices, Eric William said that 'it is not us who have invented that we should look good in nice places on pictures; it is the guy who has invented photography.' Though sub-Saharan migrants did not document all aspects of their everyday life, some pictures were misleading and informants were often ashamed when I raised the issue. Favourite poses included pretending to be on the phone and opening the door of a fancy car in a wealthier neighbourhood. Over-the-top photomontages on the internet were quite popular (see Chapter 4). In *L'Embassade*, I met several newly arrived migrants who had been attracted by extravagant tales about easy life in Morocco from brothers and cousins who actually lived in the forest near Nador. In fact, this concern was one of the major preoccupations for migrants in Taqaddoum when, as described in Chapter 1, they set up their organization ALECMA.

Conclusion

Sub-Saharan migrants did not form an 'imagined community' founded on a transformative rite of passage where all became equals. Neither were they merely atomized, selfish individuals taking advantage of one another to reach their migratory and life goals. Regardless of their backgrounds, migrants in Taqaddoum recognized one another on the basis of a shared 'suffering' and the same aspiration for an 'objective'. They were 'all blacks' and suffered as such in Morocco. Adventure offered the possibility to renegotiate existing social relationships and create new ones, although they were not always long-lasting. Migrants' journeys intersected one another and they needed one another in order to continue.

Solidarity and trust were not rendered impossible because of suffering and ubiquitous violence. Migrants' 'mentality', their courage, force and endurance in overcoming ('to shock') obstacles and suffering, was the basis of trust and solidarity. However, they were caught in a tension between 'not wasting one's *mbeng*' and 'not spoiling others' *mbeng*'. As such, relationships amongst migrants were precarious and constantly had to be renegotiated since adventurers' quest for the 'objective' was tied both to other migrants and their own families (and with Moroccans as explored in

Chapter 3). ‘To find themselves’, migrants had to help one another but stay focused on themselves and on providing for their families.

The suffering and hardship endured were constitutive of obstacles which offered valuable lessons for migrants. Yet, adventure was not depicted as simply a transitory obstacle to overcome. It was inscribed in a life-long struggle for migrants who had aspired for changes already in their home countries and often expected to continue doing so once in Europe. However, their self-representation as heroic figures led to moral conundrums since whilst it alleviated shame, also misled friends and relatives about the dangers inherent to the journeys. As described in Chapter 1, this moral issue over self-representation was central to political organisation for adventurers in Taqaddoum.

Conclusions

A few days following my return from a trip to Italy to renew my visa, my flatmate Stéphane and I decided to go to the *Sables d'or* beach in Temara, south of Rabat. On a warm, late spring Sunday, I went around *Le Consulat, L'Embassade* and a few other places in Taqaddoum to rally some of our sub-Saharan friends. Whilst many had previously been to Temara when working on constructions sites, none of them had been to the popular, nearby beach. There was a lot of enthusiasm but some were wary of getting out of Taqaddoum if it was not for work and preferred to stay in rather than risk encountering the police. Walking in Douar Hajja, I came across Moroccan Ali coming back from the park where he slept rough: 'I also went to the beach yesterday, to change my mind a bit. Otherwise you go crazy. If you see someone crazy, *wallah*, it means he thinks better than you and me.' Holding his sleeping bag, he brought the conversation back to Moroccan politics: '"Don't give me fish, teach me how to fish." It is Chinese. Here in Morocco you get no fish and they don't teach you how to fish either.' He laughed loudly, and I left him to enter into *Le Consulat*.

Perez was keen. 'Today the beach will be black', he repeated ecstatically. Others decided to join too but I could feel some unease, the source of which became clear when they awkwardly asked about my recent trip to Europe and I clumsily inquired about recent *attaques* at the border. The mood lighted when I produced some colourful thread bracelets – the kind of cheap lucky charm sold on Italian beaches. They laughed at my *'grigri*' and teased me saying I too believed in *chance* and that European bracelets were guaranteed to help them *boza*, to cross into Europe; although Perez has so far been unsuccessful in crossing, the bracelet has remained a topic of derision. We made our way to a café near *château* and talked about the combination of courage, strength and *chance* needed in adventure whilst waiting for Stéphane and the others to get on the bus to Temera and then the *grand taxis* to the beach.

We were around fifteen and attracted some stares from the Moroccan families already settled on the beach. Undeterred, we marched until we found a good spot. There was much banter, with the usual jokes about hopping onto a boat straight to Spain or Brazil. I discouraged Estra from taking a picture next to the policemen patrolling on horseback. In typical hyperbolic fashion, Eric William complained to me

about someone fishing near a sewage pipe heading into the water: ‘then you buy us sardines’ sandwiches in Taqaddoum and that’s what we eat. If it was not for God, adventurers would already have been handed over to death.’

We settled down on the sandy beach. ‘I notice that white skin is rather weak’, Perez told me while I was applying sunblock. Turning his attention to a group of Moroccan girls walking along the water, he continued ‘Moroccan girls kill us blacks!’ Some lay flat on the towels we had brought whilst others went closer to the water. Estra was giving long, hard stares at the waves and the horizon. I did not know then, but he had never seen the sea before and the following day he was due to travel to Tangier with a zodiac for his first attempt to cross to Spain.

After a while, the conversations stopped revolving around Taqaddoum and the borderlands. Ivoirian Ahmed talked about how adventure required migrants to constantly control themselves ‘but here ‘[at the beach], we can really forget our worries.’ Perez nonchalantly walked near a group of Moroccan youth playing football and showed off his agility by performing a series of back flips. A Moroccan boy passed him the ball and Perez and a few others joined the game. Cameroonian Stéphane, Ahmed and Estra left to approach a group of Moroccan girls playing in the waves. I too went along and listened as one of the girls asked Stéphane if they had managed to get to Spain yet. Wearing counterfeit ray-ban sunglasses, Stéphane gave her a big smile and said that yes, they had been to Spain a long time ago but now they were living in France and were on holiday in Morocco. The girls laughed while listening to them making up stories about their lives in Europe.

When it was time for us to go, we realized we were short of cash, buses were full and getting taxis was not easy – we had no choice but to first walk to Temara’s city centre to find some means of transport back to Rabat. It took us over an hour. Full of sand and thirsty, we walked in a line along the busy coastal road. Armed guards in military uniforms outside official buildings gave us suspicious looks. The line progressively spread thinner because some had sustained injuries in the borderlands and were walking slowly. The mood grew sombre, some were complaining about having to return ‘to Taqadadoum, to the same problems.’ Pierre, a Cameroonian from *Le Consulat*, protested this was a ‘forced march’ similar to deportation into the Algerian desert. Someone asked what happened to the ‘transport money’, prompting

Stéphane and I to jokingly remind them this was not some kind of official Caritas-organized event. When Aziz complained asking why we did not try to negotiate better with some of the taxi drivers, I snapped back saying Stéphane and I were not their mum and dad and they could do whatever they wanted. Aziz gave me an angry look and refused to speak to me.

Perez told me not to worry, but the following day I went to *Le Consulat* to apologize to Aziz. I did not want him to think I was unwilling to help out or pay a few dirhams for a taxi ride. I simply meant Stéphane and I were not in charge of deciding all the details of the daytrip for everyone. Aziz told me he was not concerned about the money and explained that what I said reminded him that I might have taken them out of Taqaddoum to the beach for the day, but I could not solve their problems on their behalf. Perez added 'in adventure, we are the children of ourselves [*les enfants de nous-mêmes*].' Sat in the dark central room of *Le Consulat*, we resumed our conversation about adventurers needing to demonstrate courage and strength in the face of hardship and suffering, to overcome obstacles. Perez mentioned he was getting ready to go to Nador and we decided to go back to the beach together before he left.

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In this thesis, I have explored how irregular, sub-Saharan migrants cope with their precarious ordeal in Morocco – euphemistically defined by my informants as 'the conditions' or, as above, 'the obstacles'. Although it is pervasive, I have chosen not to focus solely on violence but strived to account for and explore how migrants deal with issues such as uncertainty, illegality and immobility. For instance, the discussion of suffering in Chapter 7 is an exploration of fragile relationships of solidarity and trust among irregular migrants. Similarly, in Chapter 3, the examination of racism, physical assaults and general tensions between Moroccans and Sub-Saharans in Taqaddoum is articulated within a broader discussion of ambivalent and unpredictable encounters I describe as nevertheless hopeful. Hence, the focus is not restrained to the pernicious effects of hostile migration politics but encompasses issues of hope, resilience and potentials for transformation. Though such promise of 'a life more bearable' was maybe most palpable during trips to the seaside, migrants' everyday life in Taqaddoum

and Morocco in general, however precarious, was not reduced to despair, violence and misery. As illustrated by the ethnographic vignette above, adventurers often asserted it was up to them to face such adversity. However, this heroic self-representation downplayed the significance of support (if not uncomplicated) from distant relatives and close-by travel companions necessary to 'reach the objective'. Adventurers' portrayal of suffering was then problematic; coincidentally, in scholarly works, such concept has proved elusive and is not devoid of complications.

According to Grignon and Passeron (1989), social sciences scholars' writing oscillates between two contrasting attitudes: a 'miserabilism' which portrays people as victims by focusing on dynamics of domination and its consequences and, on the other hand, a 'populism' which overestimates people's autonomy and resources. Whilst demonstrating various positions between those two opposite attitudes, accounts of violence, misery and suffering have taken a prominent place within contemporary anthropology. However, the shift towards what Robbins identifies as the 'suffering slot' (2013: 450), following the twilight of the anthropology of the savage, presents numerous issues for anthropologists. For Kleinman, anthropologists focusing on suffering 'participate in this professional transformation of an experience-rich and -near human subject into a dehumanized object, a caricature of experience' (1995: 96-97). Reflecting on Kleinman's encouragement to depart from stereotypical depictions of suffering, Jackson notes that the ethnographer is left with many challenges since, 'with the best will in the world, it is as difficult to distance oneself from one's own assumptions as it is to embrace the experiences of the other' (2005: 153).

The current emphasis on violence and suffering can be traced to early influences on anthropology, such as eighteenth century philosophy. As Jackson has it, until this time 'it was by no means natural or inevitable that people would be moved to pity by the spectacle of human misery' (2005: 149). In his discourse on the origins of inequality, Rousseau asserts that 'if we look at human society with a calm and disinterested eye, it seems, at first, to show us only the violence of the powerful and the oppression of the weak' (1997: 128). For him, 'pity is a natural sentiment which, by moderating in every individual the activity of self-love, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species' (1997: 154). In contrast to Rousseau, Arendt notes that 'pity, taken as the spring of virtue, has proved to possess a greater capacity for

cruelty than cruelty itself' (1963: 1989). Although she does not disparage compassion as an interpersonal quality, she points to the French Revolution to illustrate the destructive potential of basing revolutionary politics on compassion.

For Arendt, 'both compassion (the capacity for suffering with others) and pity (a sentiment which is the "perversion" of compassion) are located in the human heart and hence should play no role in the public sphere' (Aharony 2015: 212). Arendt argues that 'because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters […] are located, it remains politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence' (1963: 86). Further, she asserts that since pity could not exist without suffering, it has 'a vested interest in the existence of the unhappy' (*ibid*: 89). Neither can set out to change the world since they do not allow 'the processes of law and politics' (*ibid* 86-87) but lead to swift and violent action. Echoing Arendt's analysis of compassion, Fassin examines the 'increasing confusion between the humanitarian and the political [as] a structural feature of contemporary biopolitics' (2005: 382), exemplified by the drop in grant rates for political asylum and increase in rates of recognition of humanitarian reasons in France. According to Fassin, 'the recognition of the refugee status by European nations appears as an act of generosity on the part of a national community toward a "suffering stranger" rather than the fulfilment of a political debt toward "citizens of humanity"' (2005: 376). Asylum-seekers, constructed as illegal migrants, 'oscillate between being objects of repression and compassion' (*ibid*).

Rather than boundless sentiments, Arendt proposes the 'principle' of 'solidarity' as a basis for revolutionary politics. As she puts it, 'it is out of pity that men are attracted towards "*les hommes faibles*", but it is out of solidarity that they establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited' (*ibid* 88). For Arendt, solidarity, which 'partakes of reason, and hence of generality' (*ibid*), can inspire and motivate people to act. A critical assessment of Arendt's views is much beyond the scope of this conclusion. Yet, transposing her reflections to ethnography poses interesting questions. Rather than an 'anthropology of the good' (Robbins 2013), what about an anthropology of suffering guided not by passions or sentiments but by the principle of solidarity?

Aharony notes that reading Arendt's *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* in the light of her 'crystalized ideas in *On Revolution* regarding suffering and compassion can help us better grasp her attitude towards the survivors' (2015: 212). Although she follows Arendt's analysis of totalitarian regimes, Aharony criticizes it for arguing that 'the survivors of the concentration camps were not capable of reflecting on their experience in any meaningful way' (2015: 6). In her critical engagement with Arendt's understanding of totalitarianism, one of Aharony's main motivations is to demonstrate that 'survivors' testimonies are much more relevant, precisely in thinking about horrors and resisting their thoughtfulness, than Arendt was willing to admit' (*ibid*).

Within anthropology, a critical examination of suffering must relate to informants' own reflections on their own experiences. In the present thesis, I have engaged with my informants' own concepts such as 'adventure'. For example, in Chapter 5, I examine how sub-Saharan migrants talk of courage and *chance* in order to make sense of the uncertainty of their border crossing 'attempts'. In Chapter 4, I discuss migrants' contrived mobility in the face of a hostile 'migration apparatus' (Feldman 2012) in terms of an 'objective' aimed at 'finding one's self'. In doing so, I also interrogate some concepts in dominant discourses on migration such as 'transit migrant'. Engaging with informants' own interpretations within the analysis is hardly novel in anthropology, especially since the *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) debate and the emphasis on notions such as polyphony. Yet, studies of migration have been criticized for having recourse to new, abstract concepts which are not necessarily ethnographically grounded (Hage 2005) at the expense of engaging with migrants' own understandings of the processes at stake.

Although my irregular, sub-Saharan informants' use of the idiom of adventure may not warrant further use in other contexts – thereby limiting comparative value, its focus on a quest for a life more 'comfortable' and the impetus 'to exit' conjure familiar themes. For instance, it is reminiscent of Berber and Mohr's evocative study of migrant workers in Europe in which they assert that 'the migrant wants to live. Through his own individual effort, he tries to achieve the dynamism that is lacking in the situation in which he was born' (2010: 36). Berger and Mohr persuasively assert that in order to comprehend the complex issues pertaining to migration, 'metaphor is needed' (2010: 45). Hence, in denouncing labour conditions and neo-capitalism in Europe, they

argue that the migrant' journey is like 'an event dreamt in the dream of another' (2010: 47).

In contrast, this thesis has focused on migrants' own dreams and aspirations in order to examine how migrants attempt to remain actors of their own destinies in their 'quest for a life more bearable.' For instance, Chapter 2 describes how despite being neglected by state authorities besides arrests and deportations, migrants organize their own living arrangements. In Chapter 6, I examine how when faced by precarious labour conditions, some migrants attempt to carve opportunities for themselves by setting up small, informal businesses. However, as Berger and Mohr remind us, 'metaphor is temporary' (2010: 45). I am not reifying migrants' articulations of adventure as straightforward, unproblematic analytical tools. Like the 'space of non-existence' (Coutin 2000: 28), adventure should not be romanticized, for it entails precariousness and violence.

According to Bredeloup, adventure has a beginning and an end, both marked by the obligation to succeed (2013: 178). If the people I met in Taqaddoum were not at the beginning of their journey, it was not always clear whether they were near the end of their adventure – or if it was already finished. My informants often disclosed anxieties about the shame of going home empty-handed. Following my informants 'forward' or 'backward' rather than staying in Taqaddoum would provide an opportunity to explore further what it means to 'succeed' or to 'fail' an adventure. Many of my informants returned to central and western Africa whilst some are now living in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Belgium where they are facing new challenges. As asserted by Houdou, who is now working in Spain, in his poem on 'hope', once the Strait of Gibraltar has been crossed 'the struggle continues'.

Recently, media and political agenda in Europe have been dominated by references to a refugee and migration 'crisis' which almost draw a causal link between the arrival of 'boat people' and the hypothetical break-up of the European Union. Although there is not enough space here to examine what (and whose) 'crisis' it is, it can be stressed that responses and proposals in Europe have been far from original as they displayed the same rhetoric about smashing smugglers' networks – conveniently blamed for migrants' loss of lives – and exhorting neighbouring countries such as Turkey to better manage porous borders and take back those who managed to cross.

In an opinion piece on the 'OpenDemocracy' blog published on the first day of the November 2015 African-European Summit in La Valletta, members of the Migreurop network argued that it was mostly business as usual since 'the outcomes of deterrence, surveillance and militarisation are already written' (Blanchard *et al.* 2015). Pointing out Europe's efforts to further co-opt its neighbours in enforcing dubious values (e.g. 'inhospitality, denial of basic rights and cynical bargaining'), they denounced Europe's stubborn attempt at achieving, by any means necessary, 'the house arrest of the majority of the world's population and the *de facto* establishment of an "emigration crime"' (*ibid*).

In the midst of vivid debates about what should be Europe's response, the *topos* of compassion has been preponderant (see The Huffington Post UK 05-09-2015). A few weeks after being criticized for describing migrants trying to reach Britain as a 'swarm of people', as politicians felt compelled to respond to the global sensation caused by the pictures of young Aylan Kurdi, David Cameron announced in parliament 'that Britain should resettle up to 20, 000 Syrian refugees over the rest of this parliament. In doing so, we will continue to show the world that this country is a country of extraordinary compassion' (Guardian 07-09-2015). Whilst displaying opposition to contemporaneous talks of EU quotas, David Cameron's proposal further displays the shortcomings of a politics based on compassion. For some, rather than displaying extraordinary compassion, this was 'too little, too late' (Guardian 11-09-2015).

Cynically justified as a means to discourage people from attempting the perilous journey and keeping people closer to their relatives, the proposal was limited to Syrians who had not crossed the Mediterranean Sea, thereby establishing a distinction between deserving Syrian refugees who had 'kept calm and carried on' waiting in camps, and unruly migrants jumping the queue for dubious motives. This is in stark contrast with how my (although not Syrian) informants, as in the ethnographic vignette above, constantly asserted their necessary, active participation in overcoming obstacles to 'reach the objective'. Combined with *chance*, adventure required migrants to display courage and strength and, as Eric William put it to me, not wait to be picked up in bed and nicely deposited on the other side of the fence.

Although the focus has shifted from Spain and Italy to the Greek-Turkish border, the current situation in Morocco for sub-Saharan migrants begs for further analysis. After describing the field-site as a marginal neighbourhood inhabited by irregular sub-Saharans and disfranchised Moroccans, Chapter 1 explores how migrants are actively challenging processes of marginalisation in Morocco. In doing so, Chapter 1 also stresses the importance of examining the ambiguities of migrant activism – that is, to pay attention to migrants' multiple, complex, ambiguous and sometimes seemingly contradictory political claims. Failing to do so may contribute to the further marginalization of irregular migrants. The pursuit of ALECMA's uncertain 'objectives' by its irregular, sub-Saharan members – who were concurrently attempting reach their own migratory and life 'objective' by attempting to cross to Europe – contributed to the advent of a new politics of migration announced shortly after the end of my fieldwork and mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.

One of the most remarkable turning points has been an operation of regularisation for irregular migrants carried out between 1st January and 31st December 2014. According to a statement by the Appeals Commission in October 2015, there were 18,694 positive responses for a total of 27, 643 applications (GADEM *et al.* 2015: 11). However, since the beginning of the operation, NGOs in Morocco and beyond have denounced the very restrictive criteria for regularisation as well as the difficulties in providing official documents to support applications (Le Monde 30-03-2015). In early 2014, NGOs in Morocco set up the '*Papiers pour tous*' campaign to ask for the regularisation of all migrants and a moratorium on raids and deportations (H24info 23-01-2014). Whilst civil society actors acknowledged that raids and collective, arbitrary deportation to the Algerian border have ceased, migrants were regularly deported to Rabat, Fez and other cities away from the northern borderlands.

On 10th February 2014, a few hours after the announcement by the Interior Minister of the end of the operation of regularisation, Moroccan authorities started a large-scale raid in the forests near Nador, resulting in the arrest of over 1, 200 migrants, many of whom (including asylum seekers and migrants still waiting for their regularisation application to be processed) were then arbitrarily detained in Southern Morocco for up to a month until the mobilisation of civil society led to their liberation (GADEM and FIDH 2015). Hence, although NGOs have noted some improvements

(e.g. about access to healthcare and education), they have continued to denounce the non-enforcement of migrants' rights and overall brutality against sub-Saharans by co-operating Spanish and Moroccan authorities. In Morocco, the new, politics of migration marked by regularisation and police raids remain 'uncertain' (GADEM and FIDH 2015: 1). Further research on those changing circumstances in Morocco would require due attention to how migrants – especially those involved in organisations such as ALECMA – navigate the changes brought about by this new politics of migration and especially how migrants' own political organisations are embedded in this shifting terrain. As Eric William laconically put it to me when I recently asked how things were going for him and the others members of ALECMA in Morocco, 'we are here.'

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